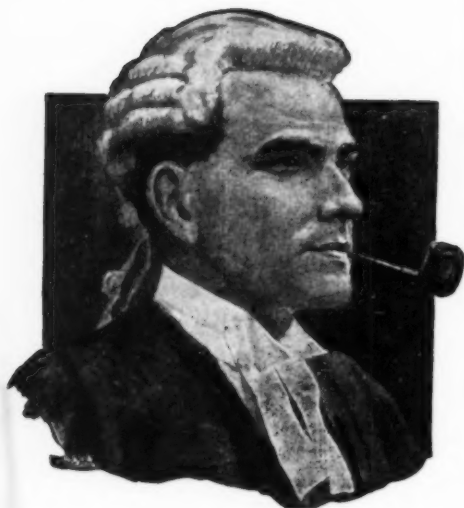




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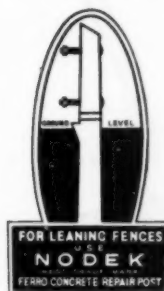
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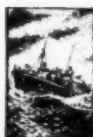
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The Ghost who was Nearly a Champion

LOUIS GOLDING

ONE Saturday night in eighteen-hundred-and-twenty-eight a ghost walked into the Castle Tavern, by Cheapside, among the tough-looking gentlemen with flattened noses and cauliflower ears singing lustily at the bar. The place was stiff with ex-champions and other big men of the prize-ring. Tom Belcher, mine host, whose brother Jem had been king of them all, was busy laying out rows of polished glasses and pewter tankards. His mouth opened to join in the roistering chorus, but no sound issued. He remained aghast, gaping at the door. 'Lord heaven above!' exclaimed Belcher with unfamiliar piety, and a brandy-glass splintered to the floor.

The Marquis of Queensberry and Tom Spring, who had recently stepped gracefully from the champion's throne, stood laughing among a crowd of hilarious sportsmen.

Queensberry started. 'Eh?' he ejaculated. Another gentleman carefully screwed an eyeglass into his face and stared at the publican.

'I—I say, Belcher, what's up?' he asked curiously. The man looked as if he'd seen a ghost.

Slowly their eyes turned towards the door. It stood ajar, the cold night-air whistling in from the windy street. Beyond, in the dark, the pallid face of a street-girl stared hungrily at the ruddy, well-fed company. The singing and hilarity were extinguished instantly, like a flame plunged in water, for a man came towards them whom no one expected to meet.

He came forward slowly, blinking in the bright lamplight, and walked to the bar-counter rubbing the palms of his hands diffidently. A big man, his clothes hung loosely on his gaunt frame and his shoulders were bowed by an invisible burden. 'How d'ye, Tom?' he brought out nervously.

With an effort, Belcher dragged his eyes from the sunken face of the newcomer. He kicked the broken fragments of glass away and wiped his hands on his apron. 'Hallo,

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Jack,' he replied. 'I . . . I thought as you were . . . away, like.'

The newcomer grinned faintly, showing the decayed stumps of teeth. 'They let me out,' he said carefully. Then his voice became strong, grim, defiant. 'Yes, sir! They let me out. For God's sake give me a quart of ale. I've got the longest thirst of any man breathing!'

He took up the tankard in both hands, his body trembling. The men around stood and watched as the drink drained noisily down his throat. Peer and commoner alike, they watched in a curious, transfixed silence. Then, suddenly, they surrounded him and the tavern was filled with a hubbub of excitement.

'Jack Carter! Begad, I would never have believed it!'

'They sent him to the hulks for life!'

'Thought the poor devil 'ad been strung up by the 'eels!'

'How are you, Jack boy?'

Queensberry hushed them all with an imperious wave of the hand. 'Tom Belcher, fill up all the glasses,' he commanded. Then he turned to the newcomer. 'Well, Carter,' he said gruffly, 'I thought you were in gaol.'

There was a silence. 'So he was,' a voice at last established. 'Seven years.'

Carter shuffled his feet, and spoke. 'Yes, your lordship. Seven years,' he repeated. 'At the hulks.'

The Marquis looked straight into his eyes. 'What is it, man? Are you on the run?'

'No, sir. Good behaviour.' He laughed harshly. 'That's what they call it when you lick the boot that kicks you.'

Another pause followed. There was a sense of unease in the air. Queensberry cleared his throat. 'Well, Carter, I'm glad to see you're a free man.'

A buzz of approval ran round the room. 'Aye, a good thing, too.'

'Monstrous unfair it was, I'll be bound.' This voice was firm and clear. Queensberry turned to it. It was Tom Spring.

'Well said, Tom. It was a grand fight you two had. How long ago was it?'

'Ten years, your lordship.'

'Ten years,' repeated Carter. He smiled wryly. Ten years! Before his prison sentence. He could remember it all as though it were yesterday. A glorious May morning, with the sun riding in a blue sky above Crawley Downs. Twenty-five thousand people, and amongst them sovereigns and princes, the Archduke

Maximilian of Austria, the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, and lords and marquises two a penny. Yes, indeed, he could remember it! There was not a man in the kingdom who could stand up against him in those days. He had thrashed them all—the great Tom Oliver, never beaten before; Ned Painter, who fought with the cunning of a fox and could hit like a thunderbolt; and Flaherty, and Cooper, and a round dozen others. Why, he had come within an ace of beating black Tom Molyneux himself, and would have pulled it off if he had not been sick! Champion of England men called him, and he stood before that vast multitude then feeling as tall as the sky. . . .

Tom Spring stepped forward and extended his hand. 'It does us all good to see you back, Jack,' he said.

Carter looked at his own calloused palm as he took the soft hand offered to him. Such a damned, delicate, ladylike fist it was! To think that it was with such a hand as this, which appeared fit for nothing manlier than embroidering a sampler, that he had been smashed senseless in the greatest battle of his career. Yet it had taken seventy bloody rounds to do it. There was at least that to console him.

'Thanks, Tom,' said Carter.

The Marquis of Queensberry took his purse from his cloak and extracted a handful of gold coins. 'Here you are, Carter,' he exclaimed gruffly. 'It'll help you to set yourself up. If you need more, have a talk with the steward at my house.'

Jack Carter stood up and looked straight at the famous peer. When he spoke, his voice was almost curt. 'Thank you, your lordship,' he replied, 'but I have no need of the money. I can still fight the best in the country.' With a nod to Belcher, he placed a coin on the bar and walked quickly out of the tavern.

JOSH HUDSON was just about to go to his bed when he heard the knocking on the shutters of his winshop, the Half Moon, in Leadenhall Market. 'Who's there?' he called. No man in his senses opened up his house at past twelve of a dark night for any idle vagabond who knocked, lest he end up in the gutter with his throat slashed. 'Who is it?' he repeated loudly.

There was a brief silence, then a quiet voice spoke. 'It's Jack Carter, Josh.'

'Jack Carter. Which Jack Carter?'

THE GHOST WHO WAS NEARLY A CHAMPION

'Ask Tom Spring,' said the other.

'Good Lord!' exclaimed Hudson incredulously. He fumbled with the bolts in his haste to unlock them. 'Jack! I can hardly believe it,' he cried, staring closely into the other's face. 'You're like a man from the dead!'

'From the dead is right, Josh. If you only knew the coffin I've been shut up in.'

Josh Hudson pressed Carter's arm. They had been like brothers, the two of them.

'Come in and tell me all about it, Jack,' he said gently. He closed the door on the night and lit the lamp. And Jack Carter talked. Hour after hour his voice went on recounting the tale of wretched men shackled in the rotten hulks of the prison-ships, crunching weevily crusts like ravenous beasts, and eating their hearts out with the maggots of freedom. And the hell of it was that he was innocent! No man had suffered a greater injustice, Carter swore. 'Listen, man,' he said. 'This is how it was.'

This is the story he told Josh Hudson.

A PASSENGER coach was rattling through the darkness from London to Oxford, and the weary travellers dozed fitfully in their places. A stout gentleman, wrapped in his furs, snored heavily, his hand slipping away from his well-lined pocket. Jack Carter had glanced at him casually, then was jolted into alertness. Stealthy fingers were fumbling under the furs, removing the unguarded purse; there was the crackle of paper-money; then the coach-door swung open and a figure dropped quietly to the road.

Jack looked through the window and saw that the thief was . . . But no! Even after this lapse of time he would not divulge the name, despite all the damage the fellow had wrought him. All he would say was that he was a friend, and this friend had a sick child, and the child (as he had well known) was dying for want of a physician.

And so they arrested him, Jack Carter, who was as honest as the day was long. They had charged him with the theft of a five-pound note. Five pounds! That was the price of seven years of a man's life, and Jack went off to the hulks to that living death, his lips sealed. He would never betray a friend, not he, not Jack Carter.

Josh Hudson shook his head. Who would believe such a story? Not one man in a million. Yet he knew Jack Carter. Jack

Carter was no liar. He would stake all he had the tale was true.

IT was some days later. The two men were talking ways and means over a meal. Already decent food, rest, and fresh air had wrought a transformation in the ex-convict. Colour had returned to his pallid cheeks, his flesh had begun to fill out, and something of the old carefree spirit was in his voice and manner. Looking at his big frame and powerful physique, it was not hard to visualise the man as he had been four years before—very nearly the finest pugilist in the country. Many said that he would have been champion if he had not got himself into trouble.

'What are you reckoning to do now you're a free man again, Jack?' Josh asked.

'I'm taking up where I left off, Josh.'

'You don't mean fighting? God, you're out of your head. A man can't rot in gaol and still keep the constitution of a boxer.'

Carter rested his clenched fists on the table. 'Listen, Josh,' he said slowly. 'After the hulks have done the worst to you, there's nothing a man can do that hurts. You're not made of flesh and blood. You're stone. And I'm a stone man who hasn't forgotten a single thing about the fighting game. I'm going to be the Champion of England yet.'

Hudson scratched his head and shrugged. You could hardly argue with a man who talked like that. 'Well, you know best, I reckon,' he said reluctantly. 'But where are you going to find the stake-money to put up against Jem Ward? Jem won't put his championship in the hat for a shilling.'

'I'll find it,' Carter replied confidently.

As it happened, he was in luck. Shortly afterwards, a certain Sir William Maxwell arrived in town. 'Sir Wullie,' as he was called, never arrived anywhere without causing a stir. His eccentricities were celebrated from the Channel to the Orkneys. He had only one arm and somebody swore the other had been chewed off by the Devil. A great sportsman, his two abiding passions were the prize-ring and horse-racing. Some years before, he had won the St Leger with his filly, Filho da Puto, and in a great mood for celebration he had returned to his hotel in Doncaster and smashed all the mirrors in the public rooms with his walking-stick, shouting: 'Awa' wi' the Sassenachs! I'm the Laird o' Monreith!'

When he heard of the arrival in London of

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the man who had been his old friend and backer, Jack Carter went straight to the hotel where Sir Wullie was staying. As soon as they set eyes on each other, they danced a reel in the middle of the reception-hall out of sheer delight. Then they sat down in the smoking-room with a magnum of champagne. One magnum became two, and two three. When they carried Sir Wullie helpless to his bed, he was prepared to back Jack Carter against any man breathing for his estates at Monreith, his personal fortune, and the whole of his stables. He would have promised to throw in Mary, Queen of Scots, too, had she been available.

The following day, still merry with wine, they set out to scour the town for the Marquis of Queensberry, who was a patron of Jem Ward. The Marquis, however, was either discreet or indisposed. There was no sign of him anywhere, so Sir Wullie, being compelled to depart for his native country in the morning, gave Jack twenty-five pounds to put down as a deposit whenever he got the chance of a match with the champion. It was scarcely the action of a prudent Scot. With so much money, Jack proceeded to tear the town apart. Four years of gaol had given him an unquenchable thirst and an inexhaustible appetite for woman-flesh, and in three days he had spent the lot.

In the end, it was Josh Hudson who came to the rescue. He worked like a slave to re-establish his friend's reputation and arrange a benefit for him at the Fives Court. On the evening of the benefit Carter shuffled on to the stage, carefully rehearsed in his part. 'You see before you one who has endured the miseries and degradations of the damned,' he began rhetorically.

The white faces stared back at him stonily, ironically. Someone laughed. The sound bounced like a ball back and forwards over the audience as it was taken up in all quarters. Jack cringed as if he had been buffeted by a hail of blows. But, suddenly, anger boiled up in him. Damn them for their smugness! He shouted for silence, compelled it by his passion, then began speaking with such bitterness and sincerity of the horrors of the prisonships that the audience were shamed. When he had finished, they threw handfuls of coins on the stage at his feet.

Josh counted up the money. It was enough to put down for the stakes of the match and pay the costs of a fortnight's training. 'This is your one chance, Jack,' he said thoughtfully.

'I was watching them gents at the benefit. You made them feel sick of themselves for a minute, but it won't happen again. Next time it's thumbs down. You've been inside, Jack, and they trust you no more than if you was a leper.'

How right he was became evident the very next day. Reporting the benefit, the *Times* expressed strong disapproval that gentlemen should give their support to an ex-convict and ticket-of-leave man. Such conduct, it implied, would demoralise the good order of the kingdom and the time would assuredly come when no man or his property would be safe from criminals.

Queensberry sent for Jem Ward. The 'Black Diamond' he was called, because he had won his first victories in the ring gritty with the coal-dust accumulated in his work as a coal-man. 'Jem,' Queensberry began abruptly. 'About this match with Carter. What condition are you in?'

'I'm orlright, yer lordship,' replied the Black Diamond. 'In the pink!'

Queensberry smiled faintly. He thought of a pun and carefully hoarded it away to use the next time he went to the Castle Tavern. 'I'm glad to hear it,' he replied severely. 'Listen, Jem, you've got to make sure you lick Carter.' He had had second thoughts about Carter's reappearance from the shadows. 'We can't afford to have a feller like that calling himself Champion of England.'

'I'll do me best, yer lordship.'

'No, do even better than that. When you finish with him it must be as plain as St Paul's that as a fighter Mister Carter is done for. Do you understand, Jem?'

'I understand, sir.'

It was on this ominous note that the curtain rose for the battle that would determine whether Jack Carter should resume his place in the society of the prize-ring or return to whatever limbo was reserved for men who had been inside.

TUESDAY, the twenty-seventh of May in the year eighteen-hundred-and-twenty-eight, was a fine bright day, of green fields lacquered with sunshine, the air liquid with bird-song, trees fragrant with the last blossoms of spring. Around a twenty-four-feet roped square swarmed several hundred people, bright as parakeets in that keen air.

Jem Ward was the first to enter the ring.

THE GHOST WHO WAS NEARLY A CHAMPION

He acknowledged the burst of applause in a perfunctory, businesslike way. Carter followed immediately. His face was white and strained, and, as he stripped to the waist, his body revealed scars left by the lash of the knotted rope. He shaped up awkwardly against a man who was not only champion but twelve years his junior. The champion looked at the Marquis. The Marquis nodded. There was a moment of sparring, the crisp sound of knuckles on flesh. Then a hurricane struck Jack Carter. He never had a chance. Five or six years before he was the greatest man in England, bar Tom Spring alone; now he was revealed, not at all astonishingly, as a pathetic wreck of a fighter, his physique and stamina broken by reason of his dreadful experiences.

Down he went again and again, but like a rat fighting for its life he clambered up continually, possessed only by the obstinate instinct of self-preservation. By the tenth round the audience—not a squeamish one, at best—were shouting for him to be taken away: they were sickened by the spectacle. His few friends pleaded with him to give in, but he shook them off and came forward again and still again, offering the pathetic defiance of his impotent fists, the blood trickling down his ruined face. Stumbling about the ring, threshing on the turf like a dying animal, he endured until the seventeenth round. Then Tom Spring entered the ring and insisted on the fight being stopped. He put his arms about Carter and carried him to his corner. 'Take him away, Josh,' he said. 'For pity's sake, take him away!' And Josh Hudson cried like a baby as he lifted his friend in his arms.

FOR two days Jack lay in bed more dead than alive. Then he got up, still weak as a kitten. Nothing but sheer tenacity made it possible for him to stand. 'Well, Josh,' he said. 'That's the end of that.'

'Och, Jack boy, it doesn't matter,' Josh replied. 'Fighting's not the game for a man of your age, anyhow. You know,' he continued, with an effort at brightness, 'I've been thinking for a long time that I could do with a good man to help me run things at the Half Moon. What about it, Jack?'

Carter smiled. The effort caused visible agony to his broken lips. 'Oh, no. Thank you, Josh, but I have other plans. Why, there's plenty I can do in the boxing game. Maybe I can run an academy or promote matches in the fairgrounds. There's a great future in it.'

But he knew it was just words. He was deceiving neither Josh nor himself. There was no future except gaol. Once it got a man, it never let him go. Because, having spent the bitter years in the prison-ship, you carried it with you for the rest of your days. There were iron bars even in the bland blue sky.

He went away, this time for ever. Josh Hudson never heard of him again. Maybe he read somewhere that a man named Ted Smith was caught stealing a chicken in Somerset, and was hanged, but it would not have meant anything to him. Let it not mean anything to us, either. Let us try, if we can, to remember Carter in his fine hour, when he almost beat the great Tom Cribb to his knees. Let us hope that was the last picture in Ted Smith's mind, before the trap kicked and his feet side-stepped something in the manner of a smart boxer—on a more solid arena.

A High Wind

*The wind is gnawing the corners of the house,
Mumbling the bricks like bones, whining at windows,
And prowling, until the door is opened wide,
To scud inside, chasing a leaf like a ball,
And scrambling and bounding in welcome over the hall,
Let in from the lonely and aching darkness outside.*

*All dogs, whom death has dragged from warm hearths and the hands
Of those who smoothed a glossy head and ear,
Bound in the wind still, howl at doors shut against them.
Let them in, to stretch for an hour by the fire, and remember.*

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH.



No. 10 Downing Street

GEORGE GODWIN

GEORGE I, who was, of course, more German than English, was very partial to the Hanoverian Minister, Baron von Bothmar. As a mark of esteem the King made the potentate a present of a pleasant house on the north side of Downing Street. Baron Bothmar's life-interest in the property ended with his death in 1731.

In September 1735 George II, with the gift of this house, then numbered 5, on his hands, offered it to Sir Robert Walpole. Sir Robert accepted, but he made a stipulation—namely, that the house should be conveyed in perpetuity to each First Lord of the Treasury during his term of office. The King agreeing, Sir Robert moved in. The *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* of 23rd September 1735 contained the following item of news: 'Yesterday the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole, with his Lady and Family, removed from their house in St James's Square to his new house adjoining to the Treasury in St James's Park.'

Sir Robert liked his new home, for on 30th June 1742 he is seated alone writing to a friend in these terms: 'I am writing to you in one of the charming rooms toward the Park. It is a delightful evening, and I am willing to enjoy this sweet corner while I may, for we are soon to be quit of it.'

Even by that date this former residence of Baron von Bothmar had a romantic history. The house was part of a larger property forfeited of Edward Henry Lee, first Earl of Lichfield, who had followed his unfortunate

master, James II, and who had married, romantically, Charlotte, daughter of Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, by Charles II.

The first building to stand on the site now occupied by No. 10 was the residence of Lord Knyvet, warden of the Mint and member of the council of Queen Anne, the wife of James I. On Lord Knyvet's death the house passed to his late wife's niece, Elizabeth Hampden, mother of the famous John Hampden and aunt of Oliver Cromwell. That house was big and roomy, with three floors, and a spacious and fertile garden overlooking what is now the Horse Guards Parade. At that period, by the way, the street, a cul-de-sac then as now, was called King Street, and it formed a small part of that large area for long known as the Cockpit—one of the most notorious districts in all London.

The grant made by James I to Lord Knyvet was of a lease for a term of sixty years. It was when the property reverted to the Crown that it was sold to William Procter and Robert Thorpe. Such details may appear tedious, but they are necessary, since they bring us to the man who gave his name to this celebrated street—namely, Sir George Downing. He is certainly worth a few words in any account of No. 10.

DOWNING was of Puritan descent, his father having migrated from the Temple to Boston, Massachusetts. Thus, young George received his education in America, at

NO. 10 DOWNING STREET

Harvard, where he graduated with high honours. He decided to return to England in 1646, a step which was the prelude to a career of brilliance. What manner of man was Downing? There is more than one opinion about that. Pepys thought him a scoundrel at one point, at another a first-class man. Downing appears to have been that quite common thing, a man on the make, a careerist, the sort of person who is never found on the weaker side, nor as the espouser of lost causes.

Downing served with the Roundheads when things prospered with Cromwell, and he served Charles II equally well. In 1677 Downing was made Secretary to the Treasury, after which rise Pepys himself seems to have modified his former low opinion of Downing, writing of him: 'He is a business active man, and values himself upon having of things well under his hand; so that I am mightily pleased at their choice.'

Shortly after the Downing Street area had passed to William Procter and Robert Thorpe, the former died. Downing thereupon bought Thorpe out and became master of the property. Every regime attracts those who are potential traitors to its cause. Downing had acquired this property during the Protectorate, but towards its end. He saw that the restoration of Charles was almost certain, and accordingly began parleys with the exiled King. He had never been really a Cromwell man. He could vouch for X and for Y, both, like himself, forced to a pretended allegiance. In 1664 Downing was granted a ninety-nine-year lease of a property that extends over most of the Downing Street of our day and at several points beyond. This lease granted Downing the reversion of the Knyvet property.

In 1671 George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, decided to build hard by Downing's property. He was immensely rich. The great house he built stood actually where No. 10 Downing Street stands to-day. It had a curious history, as did, indeed, its owner, that celebrated man who had duelled to the death, played ambassador, and set a style of living more glittering than anything London had ever seen.

To understand what happened to the Duke of Buckingham's mansion it is necessary to recall the circumstance that before the building of the Thames Embankment the whole of the low-lying Westminster area was often inundated and much of the ground, now

Whitehall, was waterlogged. So it was that, reared thus on bad foundations, the Duke's house soon showed signs of subsidence. Only three years after it was completed large parts of the mansion began to subside, and by 1675 it was no longer tenable. It was to this house, rebuilt and shored up, that the first Earl of Lichfield above mentioned took his beautiful bride.

ABOUT 1820 the renowned architect, Sir John Soane, was entrusted with the preparations of plans for repair and rebuilding of No. 5. But before that day the house had been giving further trouble to its tenants. Lord North—under whose administration the American Colonies were lost—complained that the new front promised by the Treasury had never been built. The Board of Works was memorialised that the house inhabited by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in a dangerous state, that the building ought to be demolished. The job was estimated to cost £5000. The work done under Soane's supervision included the construction of a new dining-room, a wide passageway, a room that is now the breakfast-room, together with a general overhaul. The cost was some £2000.

It is really astonishing how difficult it was to achieve any enduring improvements to this curious building. In 1832, when Grey was its occupant, he was obliged to move out, so bad was the state of repair, so draughty was the house, and so smoky its numerous chimneys. For some years the house stood empty and no First Lord of the Treasury or usurping Chancellor, as in former centuries, took up his residence there.

The opinion of successive Prime Ministers is indicated by their transfer of possession to their private secretaries, a fashion set by Lord Melbourne in 1834. Perhaps here, lest he has overlooked the fact, the reader may be reminded that since the First Lord of the Treasury is an office reserved for the Prime Minister, successive Premiers have occupied the house not as Prime Minister but as First Lord of the Treasury.

One of the secretaries who were housed in No. 10 was Mr Edward Drummond, secretary to Sir Robert Peel, and it was shortly after leaving No. 10, as he walked by Charing Cross, that he was shot by the Glasgow mechanic, Daniel Macnaghten, whose trial

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resulted in the formulation of the legal definition of insanity as we have it to this day in the so-called Macnaghten Rules.

When No. 10—the former No. 5—first became the official residence of the First Lords of the Treasury it was used primarily as a home, and no official business, or but little, was transacted there. In the 19th century, however, the house became increasingly the official centre of the Cabinet, whose rise as a constitutional feature it had witnessed since the days when ministers were little more than the mouthpieces of the Crown.

When Lord Derby became Prime Minister he is said to have stalked through the bleak and uninviting rooms with their air of offices and returned forthwith to his mansion in St James's Square. However that may be, it is a fact that during his three terms as Prime Minister he never lived at No. 10 Downing Street, but in his own residence in the square above-named.

Prime Ministers who followed Lord Derby also followed his example. Lord Palmerston continued in residence in his Piccadilly house. Disraeli never left Whitehall Gardens during his first premiership, and Mr Gladstone remained at Carlton House Terrace, though he did move in during his second term. Disraeli, too, moved into No. 10 for his second term of office. Though Disraeli was a dandy and a person who much enjoyed the good things of life, he did little to make his official home comfortable, and in his time it had not much to commend it aesthetically or from a more material standpoint. Contemporary descriptions of it suggest that it must have been rather a dismal place, a house in which chimneys blew back and doors let in searing draughts.

IN times closer to our own, No. 10 has passed through a number of phases. For example, Gladstone used the place more as an office than as a home. The Earl of Rosebery made no bones about treating No. 10 as his central office, though he did have a bedroom prepared for occasional use. Rich and sociable, Lord Rosebery preferred his fine

Berkeley Square mansion to his unsatisfactory official residence.

Campbell-Bannerman lived in No. 10 throughout his term of office, as did Mr Arthur Balfour, later first Earl of Balfour. Balfour lived at No. 10 for that number of years. Among the Prime Ministers of our time, none made better use of No. 10 than did Mr H. H. Asquith, later the Earl of Oxford and Asquith. With a brilliant and unconventional wife, he saw Downing Street become the centre of London's social and intellectual life. It was during Mr Asquith's tenancy that there was some protest about the mannequin parades held there and about the dancing of Wilde's *Salome* by Miss Maud Allan.

No. 10 became more sedate under Ramsay MacDonald; and by reason of causes unrelated to house or occupant it has not since been more than the habitation of men overworked and harassed by the strife of a changing world.

The anomalies of our constitution have been frequently the subject of foreign comment and of foreign bewilderment. And little wonder, since it is unwritten and in a state of perpetual flux. No better example of this can be given than one which hinges on the history of the famous house about which we have been writing.

George II granted the lease in perpetuity to Sir Robert Walpole as First Lord of the Treasury. And, you may ask, why not to him as Prime Minister? And the surprising answer comes: Because the constitution knew of no such office. Nor did it until Mr Balfour, by instituting a Royal Warrant, assured future Prime Ministers of a proper place, due precedence at all State ceremonies, and official recognition. The span, in direct line of occupancy, is one of some hundred years. It witnesses the evolution of the Prime Minister from a constitutional myth to the concrete position of the First Minister of the Crown, dowered for his term of office with £10,000, a year.

Is there any other house in the world that needs no further designation than its street number? If not, then surely that is fame!



Hallowmass Witch-Rides

T. D. DAVIDSON

*Thir venerable virgines whom the world call
witches,*

*In the time of their triumph, tirr'd mee the
taid:*

*Some backward raid on brod sows, and some
on black bitches;*

*Some on steid of a staig, over a starke monke
straide.*

*Fra the how to the hight, some hobles, some
hatches;*

*With their mouthes to the moone, murgeons
they maid.*

A. MONTGOMERIE (1621).

TWO lads of Nithsdale once served a widow dame who possessed a bridle with dangerous qualifications. One of the lads, a plump, merry young fellow, suddenly lost all his gaiety and became lean, as if ridden post by a witch. On his neighbour lad's inquiry about the cause, he only said: 'Lie at the bed-stock an' ye'll be as lean as me.'

It was on a Hallowmass e'en, and, though the neighbour lad felt unusual drowsiness, he kept himself awake. At midnight his mistress, cautiously approaching his bedside, shook the charmed bridle over his face, saying: 'Up, horsie,' when, to his utter astonishment, he arose in the form of a grey horse! The cantrip bit was put in his teeth, and, mounted by the carlin, he went off like the wind. Feeling the prick of infernal spur, he took such leaps and bounds that he reached Lockerbrigg knowe in a few moments. He was fastened by the bridle to a tree, with many more of his

acquaintance, whom he recognised through their brutal disguise.

The lad looked on, petrified with affright, when the Father of Cantrips drew a circle around the knowe, within which no baptised brow could enter. All being assembled, hands were joined, and a ring of warlocks and witches danced in the enchanted bound with many lewd and uncouth gestures. In the centre the boy beheld a thick smoke, and presently arose the piercing yells and screams of hellish baptism, which the new converts were enduring. Startled and terrified to furious exertion, he plunged, pulled, and reared; and, praying ardently to Heaven, he shook off the bridle of power, and, taking on his own shape, he seized the instrument of his transformation.

It was grey daylight when the conclave dispersed, for the orgies could not endure the rebuke of the sun. The youth watched his mistress, who, all haste and confusion, was hurrying to her steed. Promptly he shook the bridle over her brow, whereupon the woman started up in the form of a 'gude grey mare,' and was hastened home with such push of spur that all competitors were left behind! The sun was nigh risen as the lad hurried into the stable. Pulling off the bridle, he saw that his cantrip-casting mistress appeared with hands and feet lacerated with travel, and her sides pricked to the bone. On her rider's promising never to divulge his night adventure, she allowed him to keep the bridle as a pledge of safety.

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Many such tales are extant, and they come in strict pattern from every country in the world. The action is that of a witch and the mode she adopts to travel to the coven meeting. It was evident that no mortal means could enable the witch to be carried on journeys over vast stretches of land and sea in a matter of minutes, and they were popularly credited with riding on broomsticks and cats, and some, it was said, possessed the power of transforming human beings into some form of animal.

Our sources of information are legends and the witchcraft trials of Scotland, 'that little graveyard corner,' as Burton refers to the trials. Legendary accounts are for the most part weirdly grotesque, and, like the opening tale, are mainly concerned with the transformation of humans into some animalistic shape. The well-versed witches of Nithsdale, however, could sit on the coat-tails of the moon, a feat not unknown in Elgin, where we find a sculptured stone panel in the cathedral which depicts a witch astride the moon on her way to a coven meeting.

PROBABLY the first notice of aerial transportation in Scotland is to be found in a tract entitled *Newes from Scotland*, written in 1591, and dealing with the celebrated witch conspiracy against the life of King James VI. This pamphlet, one of the most interesting accounts of witchcraft in the contemporary literature, and certainly the most graphic account, describes how this witch plot was discovered 'by meanes of a poore Pedler travailing to the towne of Trenent, and that by a wonderfull manner he was in a moment conveyed at midnight, from Scotland to Burdeux in Fraunce (beeing places of no small distance between) into a Marchants Seller there, and after, being sent from Burdeux into Scotland by certaine Scottish Marchants to the Kinges Maiestie, that he discouered those Witches and was the cause of their apprehension.'

From the Keith district comes a tale very similar to the Warlock of Oakwood's ride on Diabolus to the King of France. A farmer went into his stable one morning and found his mare covered with sweat, looking as if it had just returned from a hard ride. He tried in vain to make it rise. All its strength was gone. He sent for the canny-wife of the district, who, on arrival, looked at the beast

and said: 'Nae winner yer horse is nae able t' rise. It's been in Spain sin the streen.' She then flapped her apron in its face, and up the animal jumped as if nothing whatever had happened.

When we come to analyse the confessions taken down at the witch trials, we find that there is one noticeable feature—before about 1650 the methods of witch locomotion were conventional and rational. Witches were content to walk, to ride on sows, to go pillion on horseback and on broomsticks. This last mode of transport, which most impressed the imagination, and which has become proverbial, is but a variant of riding on sticks, and, although seldom mentioned in the Scottish records, does occur occasionally in the English accounts. Before 1656 there is no evidence of their use in flying through the air. In every case the riding was a piece of symbolic ritual, such as, for example, the case of Lady Alice Kyteler in 1324, when, 'in rifleing the closet of the ladie, they found a Pipe of oyntment, wherewith she greased a Staffe, upon the which she ambled and galloped.' After the middle of the 17th century the confessions became as highly coloured as the most imaginative legend. For instance, to quote one English report, Julian Cox, in 1664, stated that one evening 'she walkt out about a Mile from her own House, and there come riding towards her three persons upon three Broom-staves born up about a yard and an half from the ground.'

To return to the Scottish cases, Sinclair, in his book *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (1685), informs us that in 1684 a witch, Helen Eliot, while lying in prison in Culross awaiting trial, was visited by the Devil, who, notwithstanding she was safely secured in the stocks, carried her off. When flying through the air with the Devil, she exclaimed: 'O God, whither are you taking me?' Immediately the Devil let her drop, whereby 'she brake her Leggs and her Belly.' Sinclair's correspondent, 'a Person of great honesty and sincerity,' we are told, 'saw the impression and dimple of her heels; as many thousands did.'

In the evidence against Bessie Henderson, at the Crook of Devon, it was stated: 'Ye was taken out of your bed to that meeting in an flight'; and several people alleged that they had seen Christian Stewart 'flying aboue thair headis, cuming from Leyth.' The witches of Carnwath had various means at

HALLOWMASS WITCH-RIDES

their disposal—cats, cocks, bundles of straw and bourtrees, while Isobel Gowdie of Auldearn employed beanstalks, which she put between her legs, thrice repeating:

*Horse and Hattock, horse and gae,
Horse and Pellattus, ho! ho!*

and off she flew. The last witch in Scotland to suffer the penalty, Janet Horne, 'rode upon her own daughter transformed into a pony and shod by the Devil, which made the girl ever after lame in hands and feet.'

THE flight of witches is referred to by many contemporary writers, who invariably describe the phenomenon indignantly, regarding it as the result of delusion by the Devil. The reality of the phenomenon, however, was reflected in the civil and ecclesiastical laws. Reginald Scot, in his *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), states the earliest reference to be in a decree of the 9th century, attributed to the Council of Ancyra. The reference, in Scot's rendering, runs: 'Certaine wicked women following sathans pronocations, being seduced by the illusions of divels, believe and professe, that in the night times they ride abroad with Diana, the goddesse of the Pagans, or else with Herodias, with an innumerable multitude, upon certaine beasts.' In similar language, Bartholomew Iscanus, Bishop of Exeter (1161-80), condemns 'whosoever ensnared by the Devil's wiles, may believe and profess that they ride with countless multitudes of others in the train of her whom the foolishly vulgar call Herodias or Diana.'

Such accounts acquired an additional degree of probability as a consequence of the many and varied scriptural narratives of transportation by unseen hands. As a theological problem levitation presented many difficulties and was, of course, insoluble if regard were had to the orthodox conception of a spirit. It was remembered that Christ was carried by the Devil through the air and placed on a pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, and therefore, it was argued, if the Devil could do this to one body he could do it to all. Equally well known are the levitational feats of St Francis Xavier and the Franciscan monk St Joseph of Copertino. So the feats of levitation which the witches claimed to perform in order to attend their midnight meetings had to be recognised, or

else some explanation, plausible, and in keeping with contemporary religious ideas, had to be found to account for the phenomenon. Delusion by the Devil was not sufficiently positive in itself, so it was universally put out, and accepted with the utmost credulity, that special ointments and drugs were used.

The inquisitor Henri Boguet said that the witches 'often went to the assemblies, sometimes on a broom. . . . These also rub themselves first with a certain grease or ointment.' The Somerset witches confessed that 'they anoint their Foreheads and Handwrists with an oil the Spirit brings them (which smells raw) and then they are carried in a very short time using these words as they set off, "Thout, tout a tout, tout, throughout and about," and when they return, "Rentum tormentum."'

According to Reginald Scot, the ointment 'whereby they ride in the aire' was made of the flesh of unbaptised children, and he gives us two recipes: '(1) The fat of young children, and seeth it with water in a brasen vessell, reserving the thickest of that which remaineth boiled in the bottome, which they laie up and keepe, untill the occasion serveth to use it. They put hereunto Eleoselinum, Aconitum, Frondes populeas, and Soote. (2) Sium, Acarum vulgare, Pentapyllon, the blood of a flitter mouse, Solanum somniferum, and Oleum. They stampe all these together, and then they rubbe all parts of their bodys exceedinglie, till they looke red, and be verie hot, so as the pores may be opened, and their flesh soluble and loose. They ioine herewithall either fat, or oil in steed thereof, that the force of the ointment maie the rather pearse inwardly, and so be more effectuell. By this means in a moonlight night they seeme to be carried in the aire.' The sensation of flight may, of course, be produced by a number of drugs, and it has been pointed out, in an appendix to Dr Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), that aconite, particularly when absorbed by the skin, could give rise to this sensation.

IN any consideration of the reported cases of aerial flights in the witchcraft trials it cannot be too strongly emphasised that they are derived from biased sources and that most of the confessions were extracted by torture. An examination of the 'free' confessions shows that they are not the spontaneous utterances of the accused, but the

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answers to specific questions, so that, as James Lovell observed, 'it is impossible to distinguish what was put into the mind of those who confessed by their examiners, from what may have been there before, the result of a common superstition.'

There seems, however, to be a vein of sincerity running through some of the claims made by the witches. Many of these claims are incapable of explanation. Some bear a close resemblance to well-recognised varieties of erotic dreams; others, again, are due to hallucination. Several times, it is reported on good authority, people watched witches who went into trances and who afterwards claimed to have been carried around the countryside to meetings with their fellow-witches. Such trances, especially when recounted in a misleading form, would account for many of the witches' claims that they met in covens at midnight where they danced naked all night long until the warning cock's-crow. This point, as to whether only the spirit went on such excursions or whether the Devil substituted an artificial body for that of the absent witch, has been taken up and discussed at great length, particularly by Guazzo. Daneau in his *Dialogue of Witches* firmly rejects any such theory, on the ground

that an infinite number of confessions proved beyond doubt that witches were bodily present at these meetings. He receives his answer from Isobel Gowdie, the renowned witch of Auldearn, who in her confession stated that before leaving home to attend a meeting she would place her broom on the bed to represent her to her husband, at the same time saying:

*I lay down this boosom in the Devil's name.
Let it not stir quhill I came again.*

In any case, no matter how the phenomenon was explained, the person was guilty of witchcraft, since the intention was certainly evil, even if the meeting was attended only in imagination.

In a last analysis, the most that can be said about the unexplainable cases is that they bear a remarkable resemblance to the exploits of Nigger Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, or, to come nearer home, to the feats of the Countess of Dumbfries, who, reports Wodrow in his *Analecta*, 'was under a very odd bewitchment, and did frequently fly from one end of the room to the other, and from one side of the garden to the other'—an accomplishment, comments Andrew Lang, which would have been invaluable at a garden-party.

Green Glass Stick

(At one time long sticks of twisted green glass were hung over house-doors to keep witches away)

*'Pray, what are you for, you green glass stick,
Hung over the door?'*

*'To keep away witches, you old broomstick.
Pray, what are you for?'*

*'By day I am sweeping the yard and byre,
But when it is dark,
And when cats' eyes glow, and the owls tu-who,
And the watchdogs bark,*

*'I am up and away under midnight skies,
With a host beside
Of sister broomsticks, a witch's horse
In a witch's ride.*

*'But now I am weary. Pray, let me in,
Oh, sister of glass.'*

*'I am here to keep witches away, broomstick,
And you cannot pass.'*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.



In Confidence

CHARLES R. POOLE

'UNDERSTAND me, Tony,' said Mr Chester Parbury, standing squarely on the hearthrug and fixing his son with an inflexible and uncompromising eye, 'if I pay this money and get you out of the mess I shall expect you to pay it back, every penny. If you will insist on gambling—'

'Hardly gambling, Dad,' demurred Tony, with a deprecating smile. 'Speculating. There's a difference.'

'Nonsense!' retorted his father brusquely. 'Buying the kind of dud shares you did is sheer gambling. What made you do it?'

Tony considered the question meditatively, rumpling his dark hair with his fingers in a way that was characteristic of him. 'Well, you see, Dad, I was new to the game and I've a strong suspicion now that the set I got in with were just looking for a sucker. With the result—'

'With the result,' snapped his parent, 'that you've come unstuck for three hundred pounds, which you have the effrontery to expect me to pay. Very well! I'll pay it, but on condition that you promise to give up speculating and repay me by instalments out of your salary. Is that agreed?'

Tony nodded glumly.

'Not,' his father added, 'that I want your money—'

Tony looked up with dawning hope.

'But,' Mr Parbury continued grimly, picking up a newspaper, 'I mean to have it. Every sou. I intend this to be a sharp lesson to you.'

He sat down, adjusted his glasses, and began to read, indicating that the subject was closed.

Tony lit a cigarette and sat smoking moodily. 'Pity,' he murmured, 'that this should have happened just now. Of course, I'll keep my promise, but I had a simply priceless tip given me to-day.'

His father looked up sharply. 'Tip!' he snorted. 'There you go again. That's how young fools like you get landed in a mess. Taking tips. I've no patience with you.' He paused. 'What is this wonderful tip?'

'Well—' Tony hesitated. 'It's confidential really, but as you don't speculate there's no harm in telling you. Norland Deepes. They're a quiet market at the moment, but in a week or two they'll simply soar. You'll see! I've had special inside information from a friend.'

'Indeed!' said his father sarcastically. 'One of those clever fellows, I suppose, with the gift of prophecy!'

'It's not a man, Dad. It's a girl.'

'A girl!' Mr Parbury's eyebrows shot up. 'Are you crazy, Tony? D'you seriously mean to tell me you'd be fool enough to risk money on the word of an uninformed girl?'

'She's not uninformed. She's pretty well up in Stock Exchange matters. As a matter of fact, it's Denise.'

'Denise? D'you mean Denise Shillington—the young woman with whom you told me you were rashly contemplating matrimony?'

Tony surveyed his parent with a pained look. 'You know, Dad, I don't quite like

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the way you put that. As if Denise were just anybody. She's a marvellous girl! She's—'

Mr Parbury checked him with upraised hand. 'Spare me, Tony! Denise may be all you think her, but she struck me as just an ordinary girl. I'm sorry to learn that she, too, is afflicted with this gambling taint.'

'That's not fair!' Tony protested warmly. 'Denise isn't a gambler. She only speculates occasionally and in a small way. She may have done a bit of a plunge over Norland Deepes, but that's a special case. A friend of hers in the City has got wind of a confidential cable straight from the mine. They've made a simply stupendous strike. Those in the know are keeping it dark at present, but when the news is officially confirmed the shares will simply rocket. It's a dead snip!'

'Huh!' growled Mr Parbury contemptuously, looking at his watch and rising. 'I know these dead snips! Thank goodness you will have no money to waste on them for some time to come.'

OVER the lunch table at a suburban restaurant Tony broke the news to Denise. Denise, with her fresh complexion, soft wavy brown hair, and blue-grey eyes, was nice to look at, but her chin, though rounded, was surprisingly firm. She listened to Tony's account of the interview with growing perturbation, tempered by loyal indignation on his account. 'I think it's a shame!' she declared warmly. 'It's going to take you a long time to pay all that money. How long?'

Tony shrugged. 'Heaven only knows!'

'And in the meantime,' she pointed out, 'it upsets all our plans. It's not fair, Tony. Your father is pretty well off, isn't he? I think it's horribly mean of him.'

'He isn't mean,' said Tony gloomily. 'He's annoyed with me for gambling in dud shares and means to make me sit up for it. I'm sorry, Denise. It's my own fault.'

'Well, don't worry, darling,' said Denise consolingly. 'You couldn't help being unlucky. And there's one bright spot you mustn't overlook.'

'What's that?'

'Norland Deepes. I don't mind telling you I've gone all out this time. Jimmy Craddock says they'll quadruple themselves and more in a few weeks. And he ought to know. I'm sure to make a packet and then we'll be on velvet.'

Prospects of coming affluence gave the situation a rosier aspect. The two resumed their lunch with lightened spirits, their minds dwelling pleasantly on profits to come. With the optimism of youth they spent a happy hour planning in advance the disposal of the money.

Yet less than a week later Denise astonished Tony by observing that she had changed her mind about Norland Deepes. 'You know, darling, I don't think things can be quite as rosy as we were led to expect. Anyway, I sold my shares this morning.'

'Sold them!' ejaculated Tony, dumb-founded.

'I had a hunch, darling. I always trust my hunches.'

'But why on earth—'

'Look at it like this. If Jimmy's information had been correct something would have happened by now. You can't keep that kind of news dark for long. It leaks out in all sorts of ways. By now there would have been at least a little quiet informative buying. There hasn't been. The market is dead. I only just managed to get what I gave for them.'

'Oh, well,' said Tony disappointedly, 'I suppose you know best.'

REGRETFULLY Tony put Norland Deepes out of his mind. But with this expectation dashed, the debt for three hundred pounds loomed large once more, the only hope remaining to him being the somewhat remote one of inducing his father to reconsider his decision.

He was toying with the idea at breakfast one morning, casting about in his mind for a tactful way of broaching the subject, when he became aware of tension in the atmosphere. Sundry snortings and rustlings of his morning paper indicated that Mr Parbury was reading something that he found displeasing. Once or twice he paused and glanced sharply over the top of the paper at his son. At length he lowered the paper and cleared his throat. 'Some weeks ago, Tony, you mentioned to me a certain share which was due for a spectacular rise very shortly. Norland Deepes, wasn't it? You claimed to have inside information from a reliable source. "A dead snip," I think, was the term you used. You appear to have been singularly misinformed.'

'I know,' Tony nodded indifferently. 'They're not moving.'

'On the contrary, they're moving swiftly—downwards! The price is less than half of what it was then.'

'Oh, well,' said Tony comfortably, helping himself to marmalade, 'that needn't worry me. I haven't got any.'

'That's not the point,' said his father, with asperity. 'The point is, you participated in spreading a rumour which turns out to have been misleading. There's a paragraph here'—he tapped the paper—'which hints pretty plainly that the news of a lucky strike may have been put about by interested parties with the sole object of forcing up the price and unloading. By your action you may have involved unsuspecting persons in financial loss. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?'

'Well, hardly,' replied Tony, 'seeing that I didn't spread the rumour. The only person I passed it on to was you.'

'That's just it!' said Mr Parbury energetically. 'You passed it on to me. And suppose I had been weak-minded enough to credit your fantastic story and bought shares? Where should I be now?'

'In the soup,' answered Tony equably. 'But as you didn't, there's no harm done.'

'Don't quibble, sir!' his father shouted with what Tony thought unnecessary heat. 'It's the principle of the thing that matters. I hope this will be a lesson to you not to repeat unreliable information from irresponsible tipsters. And I hope,' he added strongly, flinging down the paper and rising, 'it will put a little sense into the head of that young woman you're engaged to.'

Tony stiffened. 'If,' he said coldly, 'you're referring to Denise, she sold her shares for what she gave for them.'

'What!' For some reason this piece of news seemed to annoy Mr Parbury excessively. He stood glaring at Tony for some moments, obviously struggling with an urge to say something further. Then he changed his mind, snapped his mouth shut, and left the room.

'WELL,' asked Denise when Tony saw her that evening, 'did you speak to your father as you promised? You said that if he was in a good mood—'

'He wasn't,' said Tony. 'He was in a rotten mood. Something he read in the paper about Norland Deepes upset him, and from the way he went on at me you'd think I'd been boosting the wretched shares all over the

place. Definitely, darling, it was not the time.'

Denise acknowledged that it didn't sound exactly a propitious moment. 'All the same,' she said firmly, 'something has got to be done about that debt. You know, Tony, I've been thinking of having a little talk with your revered parent myself.'

'Well, of course, I know you're simply marvellous at talking anybody round, but—'

'I thought of calling on him at his office and catching him unprepared.'

'At the office!' Tony looked dubious. 'He's a bit inaccessible there.'

'I think he'll see me,' said Denise confidently. 'I've got something up my sleeve that will surprise him.'

MR PARBURY was busy at his desk when Denise was ushered into his room next morning. He looked up in astonishment at the intrusion, and his expression made it clear that his reaction was not cordial.

Denise said: 'I want to talk to you about Tony.'

Mr Parbury frowned. 'I'm afraid I haven't time to discuss Tony's affairs just now. I'm very busy. Some other time, perhaps.'

'No!' Denise settled herself firmly in the chair reserved for clients. 'I've made a special journey to the City to see you, and now I'm here I mean to have it out with you. Don't you think you're being horribly unfair to poor Tony, insisting on screwing that three hundred out of him? You've got his promise to give up speculating. Can't you be satisfied with that? After all, it was the first time—'

'Exactly! And in his own interests Tony must be taught the first time that gambling doesn't pay. Then, I hope, there will be no second time.'

'I think you're being hard and mean.'

'I am not mean,' barked Mr Parbury, affronted. 'I am merely doing what I conceive to be my duty as a parent.'

'But in doing it,' Denise pointed out, 'you're punishing two people instead of one. Tony and I want to get married, and we can't with a debt like that hanging over us.'

Mr Parbury's mien relaxed. 'I'm sorry about that, Denise,' he said in a milder tone. 'But I'm determined Tony shall be taught a lesson. It's for his own good.'

Denise was silent for a moment, studying a neatly-shod foot with a contemplative air.

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Presently she raised her head and looked at Mr Parbury with a disarming smile. 'Tell me,' she said softly, 'how much did you drop yourself over Norland Deeps?'

Mr Parbury gave a violent start, looking oddly discomposed.

'Who—who told you I had any Norland Deeps?'

'A little bird,' she smiled. 'No, I'll tell you. A friend of mine sold some and asked me to witness his signature on the transfer. I spotted your name and address as the purchaser.'

'I see!' He frowned thoughtfully at his blotting-pad. 'Well, you needn't run away with the idea that I'm a speculator. I'm not. It just happens that, having received certain confidential information from a source I thought reliable, I was tempted for once to—er—take a chance. It was only an isolated flutter—'

'But that,' Denise broke in eagerly, 'is just what Tony's was. An isolated flutter. Aren't you penalising him for something you've done yourself?'

'Tony's case is different. I can afford to stand a loss. He can't. Besides, he's young and easily influenced.'

She shrugged. 'And you think that makes it different? Oh, well, I hope Tony will appreciate your point of view when he hears about it!'

There was a momentary silence. Mr Parbury seemed to be revolving this remark in his mind. Then he said slowly: 'I gather, then, that you haven't told Tony?'

'Not yet.' She shot a quick glance at him from under her lashes. 'I thought perhaps it would be better if I saw you first.'

'That was—er—considerate of you.'

'You see, it would put you in rather an awkward position if Tony got to know you'd burnt your fingers in the same way. It would cramp your style a good deal in the heavy parent act, wouldn't it?'

'No doubt.'

'But I must be fair to Tony. It wouldn't be fair to him in the circumstances not to tell him. Unless, of course,' she added, dropping her voice softly, 'you could see your way to—change your mind!' She looked across at him, smiling, serenely confident of the strength of her position. Nothing, she was sure, would annoy him more than to be made to look foolish in Tony's eyes.

Mr Parbury did not return her smile. He

sat looking at her fixedly for some moments, and something in his expression caused her confidence to ebb a little. 'I see!' he said at length grimly. 'If I agree to forgo that three hundred, my little flutter can remain a nice cosy secret between ourselves. That's the bright idea, isn't it? Now, listen to me, Denise. It won't do. You're an engaging minx, and that boy of mine thinks you're clever, but it wasn't clever of you to try that on!'

Her smile faded. 'You mean—you refuse?'

'Definitely! Tell Tony, by all means. I am not to be intimidated by anything he may say or think. I shall continue to exercise my own judgment. Is that clear? Then suppose you run along and stop wasting my time. I've a lot of work to do.'

He picked up a letter with a gesture of finality. Recognising defeat, Denise stood up. He watched her with a gleam of ironical amusement in his eyes as she gathered up her bag and gloves and moved slowly to the door.

'Failure of a mission!' she murmured deflatedly as she went out.

'**S**PLENDID news, darling!' Tony told Denise glowingly a few days later. 'The pater has decided to wash out that debt. Sprung it on me at breakfast this morning. He was pretty decent about it too. Said we all make mistakes at times and he wouldn't stand in the way of any plans I had in mind. So all's well again. I knew you'd be surprised.'

An inscrutable smile played round Denise's lips. So Mr Parbury had shirked the issue after all. There was a note of demure triumph in her voice as she said: 'Not so much surprised as you'd think, darling. I didn't tell you, but I called on your parent at his office the other day, as I said I would. We had a little chat about that debt, and I rather think this is the result.'

'What did you say to him?'

'I'm afraid I can't tell you that. As he's given way, it wouldn't be fair. You see, Tony, all this business needed was a little finesse.'

'Really?' said Tony, a trifle absently. 'He didn't mention your visit. But he told me something that knocked me flat. Would you believe it, the old rip had a flutter in Norland Deeps himself?'

'He told you that!' She looked dumbfounded. 'But—but—I thought—' She

SPARE-TIME WOODWORK

checked herself hastily, and in an elaborately casual voice asked: 'Did he tell you how much he lost?'

'Lost!' echoed Tony, surprised. 'He hasn't lost anything. Have you seen the price of the shares this morning?'

'N-no. I've lost interest in them since I sold. Why?'

'You sold too soon, my pet. They're leaping up. It turns out that rumour was correct after all. The strike has been officially confirmed and there was a wild rush for the shares yesterday. That must have been what put him in such a good mood this morning.'

'Evidently,' agreed Denise flatly. She took out her compact and proceeded to make

an elaborate pretence of powdering her nose.

'Of course,' Tony grinned, 'the old boy couldn't resist the temptation to point the obvious moral. He said success in speculation isn't a matter of judgment or foresight, but mainly just luck. Said his was a case in point and suggested that his observations might appeal to you. Sounded to me, the way he said it, like a bit of a crack—' He broke off, noticing her expression. 'Anything the matter, darling?'

'N-no, nothing,' said Denise, forcing the ghost of a smile. 'I was just thinking. I'm glad you've given up speculating, Tony. I think I will too. I don't think it's quite my line!'



Spare-time Woodwork

PETER ADAMS

FEW activities yield such rich reward as does the making of things. With prices to-day reaching a height which renders the average family budget startling, it seems impossible to buy those few extra articles which turn a bare home into a place of comfort. Even if the purse can afford them, they may not suit, for much of the furniture on sale to-day is mass-produced and will not satisfy the individual taste. Why not then make your own furniture as a spare-time hobby?

There is much to be said for amateur carpentry. To be able to design and make articles for your own needs and to repair breakages neatly are useful accomplishments for any householder. The acquiring and perfection of a technique in carpentry is as fascinating as the following of any craft whatever. Wood as a material is clean and pleasing to work with. There is beauty in the

graining and the texture of wood, and to take a rough plank, plane and square it, shape it, and finally rub it down to a perfect surface fitted into its place in a design—all this can give great satisfaction.

HAVING discovered the need and the desire for the work, what else is required? Well, there must be a place to work on. Many fine pieces have been made on a kitchen table, but most carpenters will quickly want something better. A useful makeshift bench can be constructed out of two boards 40" x 12" x 2" braced together underneath and supported on a rigid frame. A more orthodox and durable bench will be knocked together by a jobbing carpenter for between three and four pounds. Tongued and grooved floorboarding makes a satisfactory top. A vice

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for the bench is also essential, and will cost as much as the bench itself. To tide over the days until that stroke of luck comes along, a very useful vice can be made by fixing a 12" length of wood rigid out from one side of the bench and at an angle to it. Wood to be worked can then be placed between this and the bench and held firm with a wedge.

Then there are the various working tools. It is best to start with a basic set, and to acquire more as their need becomes apparent during work. Essential are a jack-plane with 2" cutter, a hand-saw of ten teeth to the inch, $\frac{3}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{4}$ " firmer chisels, a good oilstone, pincers, hammer, mallet, square, carpenter's rule, screwdriver, and bradawl. All these should be obtained for under four pounds. To them can be added, when necessary, smoothing and rebate planes, various sizes and shapes of chisel, brace and bits, scraper, spokeshave, etc. With tools, as with most other things, there is no economy in buying cheap goods. A few good and reliable tools will be better value in the long run than a whole range of inferior gadgets. Buy the best and look after them, for they are very precious.

WOOD to work with is not so easily come by. The supply of wood is controlled, and although there is a ration available to the householder it does not go very far. However, it is a start. The local carpenter may be able to help out with odd pieces of wood and waste. He will also know where there is any available. But the best places for the amateur woodworker with an idea in his head are furniture sales and junk or secondhand-furniture shops. At any of these he may be able to pick up for a few shillings an enormous sideboard, a tallboy, or a table, hideous in itself, but made up of very useful lengths of the best wood. Remains only the problem of getting it home and dismantling the object before the neighbours get a sight. There is a relevant story told of Matthew Hardie, the Edinburgh violin-maker, who stopped one day at a cottage for a glass of milk. Studying an old baking-board of maple on the dresser, he exclaimed: 'I see, mistress, ye have a fine fiddle here!'

The woman was astonished, and after some bantering gave him the board. Next day Hardie sent her a new board, and in due time cut from the old piece of maple one of his finest instruments.

THE bench, the tools, and the raw material are assembled, and work may begin. Simple things first—a box to hold the shoe-brushes, a housemaid's box for laying the fires, a cabinet for the tools. No matter how easy the job, if it is thoughtfully and carefully done, it will teach the art of carpentry. As the hand learns some skill with the tools, more ambitious tasks can be undertaken. Bookshelves are easy to make and only require elementary grooving. A bedside-table and medicine-chest are simply made. Stools are always useful, and occasional tables bring to the hand the more precise skill necessary for mortise and tenon jointing.

The elementary technique of carpentry can be picked up from all who practise, and here again the local carpenter will be a friend indeed. He is often an enthusiast and is only too ready to share his experience where he finds keen interest. Much can be learned from reading—there is a useful book on carpentry in the Home Universities Teach Yourself Series and there are interesting periodicals. But the best tuition of all is the actual doing of things. The thoughtful hand remembers its own mistakes and teaches itself by its movement. Quite quickly, enough skill will be acquired for most work, and finer cabinetmaking can be undertaken—bookcases, tables, chairs, cupboards, until the only limit is the amount of wood available. There is no reason why small contracts should not be taken, which will provide the opportunity to repay directly the outlay on equipment. Indirectly this outlay is constantly recouped by the ability to make Christmas and birthday presents and furniture for the home.

But best of all is the satisfaction gained in making something. The design apt to a necessity, the building in odd spare moments, and finally the article finished and fitting into its place in the home—all this is stimulating and exciting, and results in a rare feeling of something accomplished.



Six Weeks in Mauritius

D. E. STEVENSON

'YOU are a citizen of the world, and a part of it,' said Epictetus. During my visit to Mauritius this challenge to adventure rang in my ears like a refrain, for if we are citizens of the world we ought to know something about it—we should know not only the main thoroughfares but the side-streets as well—and Mauritius is part of our heritage which few of us have explored.

The Island of Mauritius is a tiny speck upon the map of the world; you will find it in the Indian Ocean somewhere between Madagascar and Australia and a little to the north of Capricorn. The island is shaped like a pear, and is of volcanic origin, ringed with reefs of white coral upon which the long, blue rollers of the Indian Ocean break with a thunderous roar. It is an island of strange contrasts—of old and new, of black and white, of warm golden sunshine and torrential rain. Although it is so small—about thirty-six miles by twenty—the scenery is very varied. Round the coast there are blue bays and wide blue lagoons, calm and warm and salty, but inland the ground rises rapidly to hills and plateaux, and to wild gorges where little rivers toss themselves amongst black rocks.

The crown of the island is a volcanic mount, with a crater in the middle of it—a deep, round crater, known as Le Trou aux Cerfs, which once belched fire and brimstone but now is full of green undergrowth. The day we visited Le Trou aux Cerfs was a day of brilliant sunshine and light airs. Looking

down into its shadowy depths, we saw a group of Indian women washing their clothes in the still, dark pool which lies at the bottom of the crater. They were so far away that their chatter came faintly to our ears like the chatter of birds—and, indeed, they looked like a flock of brightly-coloured birds in their red and blue and yellow saris.

From the rim of the crater there is a magnificent view of the island, green and lush with tropical vegetation, with fields and fields of tall green sugar-cane and feathery pink flowers waving in the breeze. All round the island are the great masses of rock, the weird jagged peaks which stand guardian by the seashore and round the edge of the plain. These peaks, rising boldly in volcanic masses, are the most memorable feature of the scene; wherever one goes they are visible, improbable and fantastic, outlined against the sky as if they had been cut out of cardboard, looking for all the world like the backcloth of a stage. To see these peaks with the sun setting behind them is an unforgettable experience. Perhaps there are a few clouds floating above them, small dove-coloured clouds with linings of fiery gold, and in the foreground a tall palm-tree with its tapering stem and crown of green leaves. The sun sinks rapidly, plunges into the sea and is gone—and, almost immediately, it is dark. A star appears in the sky, first a bright planet, and then the constellation of the Southern Cross. Night has come.

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ALTHOUGH Mauritius is so small, the climate in different parts of it varies considerably. Upon the plain or raised plateau which occupies the centre of the island the rainfall is very heavy—at Curepipe it is about 120 inches a year. The sky will be clear and blue, the sun warm and golden, and then quite suddenly the clouds gather with incredible swiftness and down comes the rain in drenching silver showers. In a moment, or so it seems, the ground becomes sodden as a sponge and all the little ditches and gutters and rivulets are running races.

In the south, at the base of the pear, lies Souillac, where the south-east trade winds sweep in from the sea. Here also the rainfall is high and there is a steamy jungly atmosphere; tropical plants abound and all kinds of curious creepers. Here a little river flows into the sea—a slow-moving stream amongst boggy flats and sandbanks covered with straggling plants, the flowers of which resemble convolvulus. There is a wide gap in the reef at Souillac and legend has it that this is where the pirates landed and hid their ill-gotten gains, but although several expeditions have searched for pirate treasure none has been found. Mauritius lies quite near the direct route from India and the East round the Cape. It is easy to imagine pirate ships lying in wait for the rich merchantmen and setting upon them and stripping them of their valuable cargoes—their silks and ivory and gold—then up sails and away to the little island far from the haunts of man, where the pirates could divide their spoils and rest securely sheltered from the storms.

In the north-west lies Grande Baie, and here the rainfall is lighter and the aspect less tropical. Quite often, looking from the plateau which is grey with clouds, one sees an expanse of blue sky over this favoured corner of the island. Grande Baie is well named. It is a magnificent sheet of water, shielded from storms by a coral-reef and by several curiously-shaped islets. These islets are of red sandstone, which is not found in Mauritius at all; they must, therefore, be of entirely different origin from the rest of the island—a pretty puzzle for the geologist! All round the edge of Grande Baie there are white coral-sands and woods of filao-trees, which look like fir-trees in the distance but on closer inspection reveal several important differences; the needles are longer and softer and the cones much smaller.

Grande Baie is the playground of Mauritius, the holiday resort, and all round the bay are little bungalows or campments. These belong to sugar-planters and shipping magnates who come with their wives and families to enjoy the sea-breezes and the delights of yachting. The children paddle and bathe in the warm, blue water; they catch little crabs or make sand-pies in the coral-sand. Sometimes they raise their eyes from such serious avocations and watch the little yachts racing across the bay from buoy to buoy, dipping their white sails gracefully as the wind takes them and leaving behind them a white frilly wake. The bungalows are of all shapes and sizes, furnished somewhat sparsely—as befits the warm climate—with matting on the floors and local wooden furniture.

There is a particularly charming bungalow at Cannoniers Point at the south side of the bay. It has a wide veranda with crimson Bougainvillea growing up the pillars. As one sits there, in a comfortable deck-chair, one sees a smooth green lawn sloping down to the shore. Beyond is the wide stretch of blue water and, beyond again, the islets standing sentinel, outlined against the cobalt sky. All round this little bungalow are brightly-flowering shrubs and trees and flocks of strange birds and rainbow-coloured insects. Of all the beautiful places I saw in Mauritius this seemed to me the most beautiful—it was so full of peace and the atmosphere of graceful living.

THE Portuguese discovered Mauritius, then uninhabited, early in the 16th century, but the Dutch, who gained possession in 1598 and bestowed the name 'Mauritius' in honour of Prince Maurice of Nassau, hold the distinction of being the first European settlers—always excepting, of course, our friends the pirates, who did not advertise their presence. In those days it was a little paradise of trees and bushes and grassy plains, but strangely enough there were no natives to be seen, there was not a single human being upon the island. The Dutch sailors found safe anchorage for their ships, and fresh water to fill their casks; they found valuable wood—ebony, mahogany, and teak—and they found a queer bird with a curved beak and dull brown plumage. The Dutch sailors had never seen a bird like it, and this was not surprising, for, as a matter of fact,

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Mauritius was the only place on earth where it could have been seen. The birds were clumsy creatures, so slow and stupid that the sailors called them 'dodo'—which is from the Portuguese *doudo*, a fool—but they were easy to kill and good to eat and a welcome change from salt pork and ship's biscuits.

Having come to this earthly paradise of Mauritius, the Dutch decided to make it their larder and a base for their operations in the Indian Ocean. They landed some livestock upon it—pigs and hens and suchlike useful creatures—and, having done so, they sailed away. The pigs enjoyed their new home. They spread all over the island, breeding and multiplying and bringing up their progeny in peace and plenty. In their leisure hours the pigs hunted the dodo and, sad to say, they were only too successful in the chase, for they, and the ravages of man, managed in the end to exterminate the creature completely. Thus the dodo became extinct and remains one of the mysteries of the world. Nobody knows its history, nobody knows why it was to be found only in Mauritius, nobody knows how it evolved or whence it came. The fact that no trace of this bird nor any fossilised remains have been found elsewhere lends colour to the theory that Mauritius was never part of a continent but is of purely volcanic origin. It is, indeed, a mountain with only its crest visible, for it rises sheer from the sea-bed and there is deep water all round just outside the coral-reefs.

After the Dutch, came the French, who in 1715 formally took possession of the island, colonised it, and renamed it *Ile de France*. It was they who discovered that sugar-cane did well in the warm, damp climate; they planted sugar and imported slaves to work in the fields and harvest the valuable crop. Big sugar-estates, with fine houses and factories and little villages of huts for the slaves, sprang up all over the island—at Souillac and Quatre Bornes, at Pamplemousses and Curepipe. Naturally enough, the localities were given French names and the language spoken was Creole, a variation of French. The island remained a French colony until the beginning of the 19th century, when, during the Napoleonic Wars, the British captured it by force of arms.

THE chequered history of Mauritius has had its effect upon the population of

the island, which has now reached the amazing figure of half-a-million and is a mixture of every race and creed. Somehow they have all settled down peacefully under the benevolent rule of Britain, whose colonial policy has been to leave well alone but to tackle troubles with firmness and generosity. Certainly Britain has done well for Mauritius and, to do justice to the Mauritians, most of them realise the fact. Amongst other benefits of British rule, there is an agricultural college which helps the sugar-planters to select the best types of cane to grow in the different soils and climates of the island, afforestation is being tackled on a large scale, mongooses were imported to counter the plague of rats, and almost the whole island has been cleared of malaria. Two years ago malaria was a scourge undermining the health of the people. Now it is practically stamped out—not an easy matter in a locality where insects play an important role and where to hold the balance between the various types of insects which affect the sugar crop is a delicate and complicated problem for the entomologist.

There are dozens of native villages—some small, consisting of a cluster of little huts and a general store, and some fairly large, with pretty bungalows standing in well-kept gardens. At Curepipe there is an enormous building with a domed glass roof where the fruit-market is held. Dozens of stalls piled high with all kinds of fruit and vegetables are ranged all round the hall and present a very beautiful and colourful scene. Here you may see the familiar cauliflower rubbing shoulders with the avocado pear; you may buy bananas at six a penny or a magnificent pineapple for sixpence.

The only large town upon the island is Port Louis, which is situated on the west coast, on the shore of a very fine natural harbour. It is here that all the business of the island is transacted; here the shipping firms, banks, and insurance agents have their offices. The streets radiate from the docks, and there are fine squares and churches and parks with shady trees. There are, too, shops of all sorts and sizes, some occidental in style, others run by Chinese, who keep an extraordinarily varied assortment of goods. Their policy seems to be to stock a little of everything, and in the same store you may buy shoes, shirts, or sweets, hats or hosiery, toys, ties, or trinkets, buttons, bacon, baskets, or biscuits, umbrellas or sunglasses, rolls of

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gaily-patterned material, patent medicines, petticoats or pictures, but, for some strange and quite unaccountable reason, these Chinese merchants rarely have in stock the particular article you need. 'It come nex' boat,' they assure you politely, and smile their inscrutable oriental smile.

Not far from Port Louis is a very fine racecourse, a natural stadium, beautifully situated amongst sloping green hills. It boasts not only an excellent grass track, with white-painted rails, but also a grandstand and a totalisator and all the other appurtenances of a modern racecourse. The crowds who throng the course are of every colour and are attired in every kind of fashion from the Parisian gowns of the French ladies to the sarong of the Malay.

SUGAR is the staple industry of Mauritius; indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that sugar has made Mauritius. A quarter of the island is covered with sugar-plantations, and more ground is being cleared for cultivation every day. Wherever one goes there are forests of sugar-cane, with purple stems, dark-green leaves, and feathery pink flowers. The cane grows from twelve to fifteen feet high and makes an impenetrable jungle. Cyclones are the chief danger to the valuable crops, but fortunately cyclones are rare, and apart from these manifestations of nature the sugar-crop of Mauritius leads a charmed existence and causes its owners little trouble or anxiety.

During French rule slaves were employed in the plantations, but when the slaves were liberated it was necessary to import Indians to work in the cane. The Indians found life in Mauritius agreeable and settled down in little communities with their wives and families. Now the Indians make up the majority of the population. Their huts and villages can be seen in all parts of the island and each little village has its mosque or temple with a coloured dome.

Not only has sugar influenced the history of Mauritius and determined its population—sugar has also made the roads. All over the island there are very good roads, some of tarmac, others actually made of sugar-cane leaves rolled flat and covered with gravel.

These roads, together with a network of light railways, are used to harvest the sugar-crop. Upon these roads can be seen scores and scores of bicycles, large shiny limousines, and gaily-painted buses of modern design. But you will also see primitive wooden carts drawn by patient oxen in charge of native boys with shiny black faces and long, thin, shiny black legs; you will see Indian women, graceful and dignified in their brightly-coloured saris, walking with jars of water balanced upon their heads; or perhaps you will see a contingent of the King's African Rifles, small brown askari, who march along smartly and who look as if they had been carved out of polished brown wood. It may be you will see, too, a nun in charge of a little group of girls, or a Chinese woman in long blue trousers and brocade coat. These Mauritian roads present a kaleidoscope of colour, a pageant of the world.

Quite lately a new road has been completed, a road to link up two large sugar-estates and to bring into cultivation many acres of fertile land which hitherto have been inaccessible. This road is a magnificent piece of engineering. It snakes down from the plateau in the centre of the island to the plain far below; it has been carved through the shoulder of a peak, blasted out of solid rock. The road winds through a veritable jungle of tropical and subtropical vegetation. There are giant bamboos; cacti and sisal; aloes, with their spiky green leaves and graceful feathery stems; banyan trees, huge and gnarled; acacias, with brilliant scarlet flowers; bananas and jacarandas and tall catalpas, with small cheeky monkeys chattering amongst the branches.

SIX weeks was much too short a time in which to learn to know Mauritius, and perhaps it is an impertinence for me to attempt to describe it—there were so many interesting places, so many beautiful spots I was forced to leave unseen. But, in one way at least, the shortness of my visit gave me an advantage over those whose duties necessitate a longer stay—my eyes had no time to get used to the loveliness and the strangeness of the island. To me the brilliance of its colouring will always remain fresh and undimmed.



Angel Unawares

ALISTAIR MacCRAE

YES, I believe in Angels of God, and in miracles, because there was an Angel of God miracle happened to me one time when I was seven years old. That's a long time ago now, but it left such a deep mark burnt into my brain that I can look back and see it all happening as if it were yesterday. It began in the queerest way, too, for a miracle to begin, on a Saturday night in a yellow, miserable-looking dockside pub in Glasgow.

Always it was my ma's habit on a Saturday night to yoke me on to my da when he went down to the pub, so that I could pick his pocket, and bring back a few odd shillings to keep the family on for the rest of the week. That was the hardest job I had to do in all my life, because I had to time it to the minute, making sure da was drunk enough not to notice my hand in his pocket, and not too drunk, because then there would not be enough money left to keep us. I had to watch myself, too, because my da and his mates kept giving me mouthfuls of beer and sips of whisky, and that made me afraid I'd get drunk before da, and not capable of taking the money. Oh, it was a queer game, I can tell you, and a queer place for a boy of seven to be playing it. When I look back, I can still

see myself on that particular Saturday night, standing with my shoulder propped up against the counter, watching all the men out of one corner of my eye, and drawing faces in the sawdust with my big-toe, for my feet were bare.

IN those days I always had three different names stored away inside my brain for handing out to the police or any funny stranger who might say: 'What's your name, boy?' None of these names was Johnny Madigan, for that was my real name, and it was a thing I didn't tell anybody unless I was dead sure there would be no trouble coming out of the end of it. So I just stood turning over my three names, whispering them to myself, and watching the men who were leaning on the counter.

I remember a woman with red eyes and straggling hair who cried over me, and said it was a hell's burning shame to bring a chiseler that size into a place like that pub was. She said I was an innocent lamb standing with my bare feet buried in sawdust and spit and sin. And I mind my nerves jumping clean up to the roof of my head when my da, who

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everybody called Big Mike, wiped this woman over her hanging mouth with the back of his hand, and I saw a small thread of blood starting out of her lower lip and sliding down her grey chin. It swelled into a drop and fell from the end of her chin on to the dirty torn blouse she had on under her shawl. She didn't make a sound when my da hit her, only her shoulders seemed to let go of something, and her head slipped down on to the dirty bit of skin below her neck. She dragged herself away with a slithering sort of sound, and the men turned back to the counter, where Black Jake Carstairs, the head of my da's riveting squad, was drawing out a bit of a ship's bulkhead on the counter, using his index-finger, which now and again he dipped in his beer. He finished the drawing and jabbed his thumb into the middle of it. 'There's the bloody out' job,' he said hoarsely, 'an' if there's any o' youse knee-creepers thinks he's been done out o' his lawful due he can go up to the yard and count the rivets hissel.'

When Black Jake had finished that speech, he threw half-a-pint of beer into his mouth and swung his two little pig's eyes round the men. He measured them for a silent minute, and then with the same finger that had done the drawing he tapped on the chest of a big red-faced man with a ginger moustache. 'You, Mac,' he barked, 'you got anythin' to say? You're the left-hand man, an' after me you've got first speak. So get it off your chest.'

The man he was poking with his finger looked up out of his beer with a stupid expression on his big Highland face, and I could see he was too far gone in the drink to know what all the shouting was about. He drew his body carefully back from the prodding finger and said softly: 'Up in Kilvore—do you know Kilvore that lies away out in the west of Ross between two terrible black hills like a long, narrow window where a man can look out and see the Coolins of Skye?—well, up there, do you know what they call me?'

Black Jake slowly laid down his beer that he had been lifting to his mouth and gripped the Highlandman by the arm. He swung him round roughly, so that their two faces were close together, breathing on each other. 'Shut up about your history, you Hielan' stoat,' he grated. 'What I want to know is, are ye satisfied with your wages?'

I saw the big Highlander rippling all over his body, from head to feet, with the surging of

his hot blood singing out for violence, and then just as suddenly everything inside him seemed to go quiet, and his face got soft and easy as a cushion. 'I'm satisfied,' he replied. 'You know I'm always satisfied, Jake. But do ye know what they called me in Kilvore?' 'Ach,' said Black Jake, his humour restored for a moment, 'Mae West they called ye, wasn't it?'

I heard a cackle of laughter rising up at that—soft, hoarse, and phlegmy laughter that made me think of water going down a drain. I heard the Highlandman's soft reply, full of reproach and a drunken sort of dignity: 'It was the Hammer they called me—John the Hammer, and that was because . . .' But by then I was too busy to hear any more. My hand was making quick darting visits into my da's pocket, and already I had got fifteen shillings away, which would please ma, and keep us eating till Thursday, anyway.

When my da's turn came to answer Jake, he didn't do it with words, but just threw the dregs of his beer in Jake's face, and then quickly broke a bottle over his heel and held it up to show what would happen if Jake tried anything. The others turned cold sober in a minute and took Jake away, and my da had another drink, and gave me one which I had to swallow, even though it scorched my insides all the way down to my stomach. Then he marched out with a drunken steadiness, and sang a Fenian song at the top of his voice all the way up the street till I thought for sure some Orange Billy would jump out of a close and kill him with a hatchet before I got him home.

NOTHING like that happened, and we were halfway home when da suddenly stopped singing and started talking about my grandma, who belonged to my ma, and always sat in the big chair by the fire, except on a Saturday night when she locked herself in the stairhead lavatory till my da got home and into bed. He hated her and always called her that 'holy splinter of hell,' which was a queer contradictory thing to say, except that she was thin and might have looked like a white splinter inside all the black things she wore.

This night my da wasn't content with just calling her names. He said he hated her sittin' there everlastin' over the fire, bakin' herself at his expense and all the time tryin' to

pray and bewitch him into an early grave. There were great maudlin tears in his eyes as he took me by the shoulders and said to me: 'Johnny, me boy, I declare to me Gawd she's sittin' there tryin' to arrange me sudden early death atween two candles, an' the blackness o' her heart drawin' shapes o' me in the red o' the fire. She'll be makin' me image out av a potato next, an' stickin' matches in it if I'm not lookin' out.'

The hot drink da had poured into me was working on my blood now, and I saw him a different way from what he was. I saw him a great, strong, red-faced man being withered away into death by a yellow old splinter of a woman, and, being anxious to comfort him, I said: 'Ach, don't worry, da. It's likely she'll die soon, anyway, for a good blast of wind would carry away all that's left of her.'

His face lighted up at that, glowed with pleasure till it minded me of a Hallowe'en lantern, and then it steadied down into a regular flame of longing, and he sighed: 'Do ye think so, son?' he asked.

To humour him I answered: 'Sure, da.' That pleased him and he started to sing again, only to stop suddenly and burst into a great roar of laughter.

When he had got back enough breath to speak, he slapped me on the shoulder and said he had just thought of a great idea for a joke to play on my grandma. I took a quick look up into his face and saw it was still laughing all over his mouth and cheeks, but not his eyes. His eyes were outside the laugh, standing steady and dark like two old black vultures over a bone. I said: 'What sort of a joke, da?'

He replied: 'Do ye know that little bottle o' tablets she carries around with her everywhere?'

I nodded my head and said: 'That's them for her heart when it gets bad?'

My da laughed louder than ever at that, a big scornful mirthless laugh that filled half the street. 'A lot o' damned nonsense,' he said. 'Them tablets are no more good than a packet o' saccharins would be, but the oul' bitch has herself persuaded her life's hangin' on them. Now, wouldn't it be the grand idea if somebody took them tablets away some time when she wasn't lookin'?'

I laughed shakily to show him I thought it would be a great joke too, and because I knew if I didn't laugh he'd knock my face into next week. After I had finished laughing, he said: 'I'm glad ye see what a great joke it would be,

Johnny, me lad. When will ye do it?' That last question hit my enthusiasm like a pail of cold water, and I began looking down at my feet, which seemed strange to me down there in the gutter, as if they were two separate things living their own life among the scraps of dirty paper and cigarette-ends. He let the silence go on for a while, and then he punched me on the shoulder and said: 'When?' and when I looked up again there was a ten-shilling note looking back at me between the fingers of the hand that had punched me.

The sight of that ten-shilling note hypnotised me, and I heard my tongue saying: 'Tomorrow. I'll do it to-morrow when I go with her to the chapel.' Even as I spoke, my cold fingers reached out for the ten-shilling note. But before my da would let me have it he made me swear by all the saints on the calendar that I'd carry out the joke, and that I wouldn't tell a living soul about it. With my eyes fixed on the note, I swore everything he asked, so he gave it to me, and started his singing again, keeping it up till we got home, so that I was glad when my ma got him into bed, and I could sit down in the quietness with my own thoughts. After he was sleeping, ma told me to go downstairs and knock three times on the lavatory door, which was the signal for grandma to come up and get into her bed.

I DID as ma told me, and grandma came out with her face narrow and white, like an icicle hanging down from her hair. Her lips had got right away from the control of her muscles and were quivering away like two bits of purple jelly, and her thin fingers were gripped hard on the beads of her rosary. In her apron pocket there was a square bulge, which I knew was made by the bottle of tablets, and when I looked at the bulge I could feel something like a hand squeezing my heart.

There was a long while that night before I could sleep, with the sweating cold fear on me, and my head whirling round with the drink and trying to plan how I would get the bottle of tablets away from my grandma and keep my promise to my da. So, between one thing and another, my face was as white as grandma's when I walked down the road with her to the chapel next morning. It being Sunday, I had my boots with the iron heel-plates on, and the noise they made on the

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quiet pavements gave me a kind of courage, till I began to hear in them the voice of my da telling me to take the tablets, and then I was more afraid than ever.

Next thing I knew we were in church, and that was the worst part of it all, listening to the chanting and watching the priest and the acolytes performing their duties at the altar. It was then the terrible thing I was going to do pressed down on me like a cold hand, and as I knelt there I oozed my fear in trickles of sweat down my back. I wondered if God would strike me dead for doing what I was going to do, and I knew with a terrible sickness in my mind that whether I lived or died this day's work would be the damnation of my soul for ever and ever. But I had made my promise, and I would keep it, thrashed on by fear and a queer twisted sense of obligation to my da. Unwittingly my hand slipped into my pocket and felt the crisp surface of the ten-shilling note, and I tried to draw some comfort out of it, up through the damp tips of my fingers.

The plan was made now. It had made itself in a sudden flood of illumination. I knew, from long experience, that the only place my grandma didn't carry her bottle of heart tablets was to the altar. She used to say: 'God won't let me die at His Table, an' if He does, what better place is in it for anybody to die, I'm askin' ye?' So there was my plan, ready-made for me. When grandma left her seat to go up to Mass I would be a second or two behind her, just time enough to dip into her black crocodile bag and take out the tablets. It would be a lot easier than dipping my da's pocket on a Saturday night.

Carefully and quietly, as the priest intoned the soft, sleep-making Latin of the service, my left hand worked with the clasp of the bag, which lay on the seat between us, until I got the catch unfastened. Grandma was too busy with her devotions to notice my furtive movements. I stole a glance at her face to make sure of that, and saw it white and withdrawn, making a journey into some secret place where her years would be lost, and herself a little child again, asking for a lamp to be litten for her through the long dark night.

The minutes rolled past on their deep and shallow waves of music, on prayers and incantations, on warnings and pleadings, until the silver bell from the sanctuary rang out, dropping its raindrops of sound into all the ears that were listening. At last I heard the

whispering rustle of grandma's black satin skirt, and the creak of her corsets as she rose and left the seat beside me, expecting me to follow close behind. With a quick movement, my hand opened the bag, groped inside till it found the little bottle, and stuffed it into my pocket beside the ten-shilling note. Then I rose and forced my dead legs to carry me up the long stone-flagged aisle to the altar. With every step my feet seemed to ring a new note of doom out of the flag-stones, and inside me a suffocation rose up to beat like wings round my throat. Before my eyes I could see the officiating priest, a slowly moving flame of white and gold and purple, and behind him reared the great wooden cross, before which I was going to perpetrate my mortal sin.

How I ever reached the altar rail I've no idea, but at a certain moment, when I felt as if my feet had sunk to the ankles in the stones of the chancel, my knees bent of their own accord, and I felt my weight pressing down on them, while another and greater weight seemed to press on the roof of my head. I dragged my hot eyes down and away from the sight of the priest and the altar, and fixed them on the dark-red tiles of the sanctuary floor—and it was then I heard the cry. It was a small, strangled, sobbing sound, and it ended abruptly with the soft thud my grandma made as she rolled off her knees and on to the floor.

The cry pulled me to my feet and over to grandma before my brain had time to add up what was happening. I knelt down beside her and lifted her head on to my knee, so that I was looking straight into her thin white face and the dark, burning agony of her eyes, eyes that shouted and screamed out of their pits of hell for help and soothing and an end to all the terrible pain. And again my body, my hands and my blood acted on their own, away out beyond the narrow borders of reason. My hand thrust into my pocket and came out with the little bottle of tablets. I opened the bottle with cold marble fingers and dropped two of the tablets into the horrible gasping mouth, between the sagging purple lips. She was quiet then, and in a while she smiled up at me. 'Ye've saved me life, son,' she whispered. 'It must have been an Angel av Gawd tould ye to take them tablets out av me bag and bring them after me.'

When she said that, I thought of my da as I had seen him last night, his great red face

THE RIDDLE OF THE NANDI BEAR

flaming and bursting with the joy of his hate, and I nodded my head. 'Maybe it was,' I replied, and added under my breath, 'but he didn't know it, surely.'

It was then that my eyes, looking down, saw the ten-shilling note, which I must have pulled out of my pocket with the bottle. But the priest saw it at the same time and his white fingers picked it up. 'Is this yours, my son?'

he asked, and I shook my head, knowing it would seem queer to him a boy of my size having all that money. 'It must belong to your grandma then,' he said, and pressed the note into her thin white hand, which closed over it like a claw. It was then I started to laugh and cry, and the priest said it was the hysterics, which wasn't to be wondered at, he said, after all I'd been through.



The Riddle of the Nandi Bear

C. M. PHILLIPS

THE great plains and high forests of Kenya Colony abound with game of all kinds—lion, rhino, buffalo, antelopes of every description, and the lordly elephant. Any of these, and many more, if you are in possession of the necessary licence and look in the right places, may be brought low with a well-directed rifle-shot, justifying the Colony's claim to be a sportsman's paradise. It is one of the few parts of the world left where wild game in plenty still exists.

There is one animal, however, reputed to inhabit the upland forests of the Colony, that has still to fall to a hunter's rifle, whose skin has yet to grace the wall of the lucky sportsman's house. It is an animal that only two or three Europeans have ever seen—and there are some who do swear to have seen it; an animal, moreover, that must possess a more than ordinary cunning to have escaped capture for so long. The animal is the Nandi bear, a fabulous beast that has been a legend in Kenya for years.

THE Nandi bear, so called from the Nandi Forest where it was first heard of and

from its bear-like habit of sitting up on its hindlegs, has been variously described by Kenya Africans. Some have it that it walks upright like a man and beats its chest, and others hold that it walks on four legs and is as big as a horse. The general view is that it has a bear-like body and is rather larger than a hyæna, and that it has a nasty habit of lurking at the edge of the forest as dusk is falling, striking down any unfortunate who chances to pass. It does not eat its victim, it is said, but scalps and devours only the brain, disdaining the rest of the body. All descriptions agree with regard to the beast's fierceness.

Europeans for their part have been known to argue hotly on the very existence of this strange animal, though their opinions are divided in the extreme. Some contend that it is a legend pure and simple, and others are of the view that it is in all probability one of the larger apes, a gorilla for instance, pointing out the creature's reported gorilla-like habit of beating its chest. Others will ridicule this idea, stressing the fact that gorillas have never been known to exist in Kenya, the nearest habitat of this species being the Belgian Congo.

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So far no nests have been discovered, this being another gorilla habit, nor has any spoor been found to indicate that the beast might be one of the larger apes.

Still others are of the opinion that the Nandi bear is no special animal at all but merely any beast that the Africans do not happen to know—perhaps some hyæna or leopard that varies slightly in some respect from its fellows, and that, dimly seen in the gloom of the forest, appears strange and unnatural as it vanishes in the darkness too quickly to be identified. Comparatively speaking, it was only recently that the bongo, that rare African antelope, was discovered deep in the depth of the African forest.

It is quite possible that hidden away in the primeval forests of Kenya may lurk some animal that has yet to be discovered and classified. Kenya is not unique in having its mystery creature. There is the Loch Ness monster in Scotland, and in Tibet are the legendary snowmen, those dread beings who inhabit the mountain snows. It is accepted as a fact in Tibet that these snowmen occasionally bite the necks of yaks and drink their blood and have been known to carry off women. Strange as such a belief appears to us, the Tibetans firmly believe in their snowmen, as do the Nandi in their bear.

Although the bear was originally heard of in the Nandi Forest, its habitat is not confined to that region. Should you happen to be camping in the Aberdare range of hills, a long way down-country from the Nandi Forest, and are unwary enough to try to pitch your camp above the 10,000 feet line, you will have difficulty in holding on to your porters. They will stubbornly refuse to sleep in the open at that height. It is not the cold night-air they dread, but the Nandi bear. As they will inform you with perfect candour, it is well known that the bear is most frequently to be met with above that height.

Some years ago a Nandi bear, so called, was killed at Malindi on the Kenyan coast. It had been a local legend for years, and turned out to be a giant hyæna, measuring five feet from nose to tail-stump. Giant spotted hyænas grow to enormous size, and one characteristic they have is that of being able to stand on their hindlegs when looking through tall grass, this giving them a bear-like appearance. The Malindi kill was one more Nandi bear that turned out to be what most white hunters and game wardens say it is—just another hyæna!

Whatever it is, devil-beast or legend, ape or plain hyæna, the Nandi have been aware of a fearsome beast from time immemorial, and fame awaits whoever first solves the riddle of this mysterious creature.

Do You Remember?

*Do you remember our sunlit summer
Now that the shadows of winter fall?
Do you think of our amber August
In our dreamland of Donegal?
Oh the wonder of each day's dawning,
Blue and silver the tranquil sea,
Golden bars in the azure awning
Lifting up for the day to be.*

*Scent of seaweed and honied heather,
Song of lark and the seabird's cry,
Shining gold of the little cornfields,
Reed-rimmed lakes where white lilies lie—
Oh the wonder of each day's ending,
Rose and ruby and golden mist,
Glowing, fading, and gently blending
Into the evening's amethyst.*

*Night on the sea and the purple mountains,
Whispering waves and the curlew's call,
Crooning streams breaking silver silence,
Magic of moonlight over all—
Oh the wonder of each day's passing
Under a silver-spangled pall . . .
Do you remember our sunlit summer
In our dreamland of Donegal?*

K. G. SULLIVAN.



The Day of the Dead

An Unusual Mexican Festival

MADGE MACBETH

TO the majority of 22,000,000 Mexicans the world is governed by a multitude of pagan gods or Christian saints or by a weird conglomeration of both. These exacting gods and saints must be constantly honoured and appeased, and this fact accounts for the bewildering number of celebrations and fiestas that dot the Mexican calendar, lend colour to the land, and make it so interesting to visit. The more primitive the groups, the more gods there are to fête, and it has been estimated that a man spends almost half his working time at this occupation; often, he spends all of his money and goes into debt. But then every Mexican loves a party!

THE most unusual of the Mexican fiestas is probably the one known as the Day of the Dead. As the name implies, it is a period set apart for honouring those who are no longer living. The origin is undoubtedly Indian, antedating by many years the Spanish Conquest, but it is no longer confined to a single race. The Day of the Dead has become a national holiday and no village is too small or too poor to celebrate.

For days, however, both before and after 2nd November, Death is everywhere present—in solemn guise, in lighter forms. There is weeping and laughter. There is symbolism in the matter of food, and there is much material refreshment, solid and liquid. Such

a mixture of the spiritual and the corporeal, such an exhibition of grief side by side with a defiant caricaturing of the Grim Reaper, completely baffles the stranger.

Imagine yourself waking one morning in Mexico City and setting out through streets that yesterday were quite familiar. To-day, their character has changed almost beyond recognition in some parts of the capital. Every shop-window, every itinerant vendor, of whom there are thousands, thrusts a reminder of Death at you. The public *ofrendas*, as they are called, vary with man's ingenuity and imagination. All over the republic bakeries fill their shops with *pan de muertos* (bread of the dead), the loaves decorated with cross-bones as our hot cross buns are decorated with crosses. Cakes and candies are fashioned in the shape of skulls, skeletons, and coffins. Entire funeral processions are made of sugar—priests, mourners, hearse and all. In toy form, they are more substantial and can be used year after year. Most realistic are the white sugar skulls—life-sized, and on occasion decorated with such names as Juan, José, Carmen, and so on. Sometimes they carry the names of well-known politicians and sometimes the simple but eloquent word, *Amor* (love). Edible, too, are tiny altars covered with food. Clothing-shops decorate their windows with sombre garments and articles that harmonise with the Day of the Dead idea.

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But the markets are the most amazing. Here are foodstuffs, toys, cheap and dear, masks, candles as tiny as a child's finger, as tall as a full-grown man. They and every other object offered at this time are decorated with skulls, skeletons, or cross-bones.

In private homes altars are set up much as a Christmas crèche is shown or a tree. Special dishes are prepared with emphasis on the food particularly enjoyed by the dead while living. This food varies with the standard of living of the family, and it is later eaten by relatives or given to people who are unable to provide heavily laden altars for themselves.

In a word, the whole country pays tribute to Death. It caricatures Death. The stranger looks for signs of sorrow, for crêpe and religious observations. Instead, he sees thousands of people eating, drinking, picnicking, and having a roaring good time. The potent native drink *pulque* is not lacking. Just another Mexican paradox—that's all! True, there are services in the churches, and visiting the cemeteries is part of the celebration, but solemnity is shrouded by gaiety, even when at private tables a place is set for the departed member of the family.

EACH district produces its especial toys for the Day of the Dead—skeletons that dance when a string is pulled, paper marigolds that open to disclose a grinning skull. The marigold is the flower dedicated to this fiesta. There are catafalques supporting the body of some popular, or unpopular, public figure, and a good deal of licence is allowed during this period. No one is supposed to take offence. Even priests are ridiculed.

Amusing and often extremely clever are the *calaveras*, or lampoons, we would call them, sold in enormous quantities for a few coppers. The satiric verses are illustrated with none-too-subtle drawings, although the poems themselves are truly frank enough to need no further clarification. Some of the finest work of the great Mexican engraver, Posada, now dead, was done for *calaveras*, and this tradition is carried on by contemporary engravers like Leopoldo Mendez, who is world-famous.

AND now the cemeteries. A visit to almost any one of them gives a revealing picture of the fiesta's underlying meaning, which in thousands of cases has been entirely lost sight of. In the cemeteries families are gathered to mourn or make merry or both with their quietly-resting dead. Picnics at the graveside were common a few years ago, but rowdiness became so violent that they are now forbidden. There is still plenty of eating and drinking, however, especially after the graves have been cleared of weeds and decorated with marigolds and candles. Marigolds are shown in such profusion that they seem to carpet many streets and markets as well as cemeteries.

Cemeteries, incidentally, disprove Mexico's claim that she recognises no classes. There is certainly 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class accommodation on her railroads, and in cemeteries the classes run up to six! In the lower cemetery classes burial is free, and the families in these classes, who watch all night, can afford no feasting, no gifts other than a flower or a tiny candle, perhaps a cheap paper toy to amuse the spirit of a child. The simplicity and sincerity of the humbler folk touch the heart in a way that the performances of more favoured citizens fail to do.

For a week the populace crowd tents and theatres to see the famous *Don Juan* played. Not infrequently the role of the world's greatest lover and that of the nun, Doña Inez, are taken by the country's foremost actors. Just as often the whole cast is composed of superlatively awful hams. No farce could be so funny; and when the skirt-chasing *Don Juan* repents in the last act—a situation never dreamed of by the author, but contrived by the producers in the interest of public morals—and is carried to heaven on angel's wings, the audience rejoices, some with yells, some with tears, and some in silence born of deep religious emotion.

No fixed rules govern the observance of the Day of the Dead, and the farther you penetrate into the villages, the more fantastic become the celebrations, yet the more genuine. Visiting remote districts is highly rewarding, well worth the inconvenience and small discomforts usually necessary to reach them.



Caviare to the General

JAMES CURTIS

NOBODY paid much attention to General Spenser any longer. In the first place, there were so many newer generals. And then, he had grown very feeble and boring with age. He had little or no money left and was quite without influence. So his days were spent sitting in the window of his club, his eyes rheumy and his breath coming with difficulty, while he recalled the time when he had been a dashing cavalry officer in South Africa. Of course, the younger members, when they spoke to him, were polite and respectful, but they did not go out of their way to be bothered with the old gentleman.

He could not even smoke nowadays, and so long ago had it all been, that he could scarcely remember the days when he had nearly jeopardised his career for love of a Gaiety Girl. Though his back was no longer straight, his long, prehensile legs, stretched out in front of him, still symbolised the horseman.

Of course, the summit of his career had probably come in 1916, when he had been a Brigadier-General, General Staff. After the scandal about Queenie, he had hardly cared for regimental soldiering and, by sacrificing a leave for a spell at a crammer's, he had passed Staff College. That hard-won success and the very gallant D.S.O. they had given him after the Modder River seemed to have earmarked him for accelerated promotion and a brilliant career. But then, throughout the 1914-1918 War, being an unrepentant cavalryman, he had refused infantry command after infantry com-

mand, believing that the arm, which he had loved and studied so much, would at last come into its own, and that he, Major-General Claude Spenser, C.B., D.S.O., would finally ride at the head of a cavalry division round the flanks of a defeated Boche army to win the grateful thanks of the nation.

Probably, had he been willing to compromise, he could have commanded a corps, if not an army, but, while admiring their hardihood, he could not be bothered to learn the technique of the foot-sloggers. Then he had rejected an offer to go to Palestine. Through a sense of loyalty to his brother cavalryman, Haig, he had been a confirmed Westerner. Of course, Allenby, too, was a horse-soldier, but one could not help feeling that it had been in some way rather contemptible of 'the Bull' to have accepted that command in Palestine of an army consisting of so many different races.

ONE November afternoon Spenser was watching the traffic in Piccadilly. Nothing was the same, and a very good thing, too. He would have hated it if he had been left lonely and on the shelf in a world which he understood. It was far more satisfactory to be left out of it now that everything was so utterly bewildering.

They had criticised him most severely in 1916 for his staff-work, for it had been he who had insisted on moving up the Cavalry Corps

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close behind the attacking divisions on the Somme, and so it had been he who had been blamed for the ensuing traffic congestion with its disastrous results on the battle. Made a scapegoat, he had been sent home, with the rank of Major-General as a sop, to an unimportant and ineffectual command, somewhere in England.

Another club-member came and, standing by the General's chair, looked glumly out of the window at the gathering dusk. 'Foul weather, isn't it?' remarked the newcomer.

The General nodded. The other man looked at him more closely. Suddenly a start of recognition came into his eyes. 'I say,' he exclaimed, 'aren't you Spenser? General Spenser? Bimbo Spenser, in fact?'

The General cleared his throat and peered through his dim eyes at his interlocutor. He couldn't place the fellow. 'Yes, yes,' he agreed huskily. 'Can't say I remember you.'

The man smiled. 'No doubt, sir,' he said. 'I was far junior to you. I'm Graham Keyes. Perhaps if I tell you I was G.3 to you in the old days on the Somme it may mean something to you.'

Again the General nodded. 'Oh, yes, Keyes,' he said. 'How are you? What are you doing nowadays?' He had still not the least idea who the fellow was, and he was not specially interested, but one had to be polite.

Although the General could not see the expression on the younger man's face, Keyes was smiling wryly. 'Like the rest of us,' Keyes said, 'I'm on the shelf. I did command a brigade in the Second War, but I went into the bag in Greece, so while all the rest were getting promoted I was rotting away behind barbed-wire. Mind if I sit down?'

KEYES sat down next to Spenser and they chatted desultorily. Both were bored and both were bores, so they got on well together. Keyes, ever deferential to Spenser's seniority, expressed his opinions on the modern world. 'England's no place to live in nowadays,' he rambled on. 'Climate's no good. Never was, of course, but in the old days there were certain amenities of life that helped you to forget how bloody it could be. Now there's nothing. Absolutely nothing.'

'Oh, I don't know,' dissented Spenser, speaking with the prejudice of an older generation against anyone, particularly a brother-officer, running down his country.

'Oh, I don't know, Keyes. I've given up trying to understand anything. Too difficult. These fellows must know what they're doing, don't you know?'

Keyes was not so sure. He went on to say that he had taken a house in Morocco for the winter. The climate was good, things were cheaper, and one could have servants. Before Keyes had really finished expatiating on the advantages of living in Morocco, the General's tired old eyes were nearly shut. He was finding it too much of a strain to concentrate. So, almost without realising it, he found that he had accepted an invitation to spend the winter in Morocco.

The house which Keyes had taken was in the Spanish Zone. Naturally, Keyes was scornful of the Spanish officers and men of the garrison. The General could not bother. He used to sit in the patio, warming his old bones in the sun, much as he would have done in the sunless bow-window of his club.

One evening Keyes came home excited. 'I say, General,' he babbled, 'I met a most interesting fellow to-day. A Boche officer from the First War. Von Taufer—that's his name. Von Taufer. Ended up as a General.'

Spenser was not very interested, so Keyes had to go on, building up the attractions of his new friend. 'Fought against us on the Somme,' he said, 'and when the Nazis came into power he went back into the Boche army. Can hardly blame the chap; after all, it was his career. But when von Fritsch fell out with Hitler it seems that von Taufer was mixed up in it. He managed to get abroad and has been living here ever since. He's not tarred with the Nazi brush. That's one thing in his favour.'

Spenser grunted. Keyes was entitled to make whatever friends he liked.

'I've asked him to dine to-morrow,' Keyes went on. 'I thought you'd probably like to meet him. We could have no end of a pow-wow over old times on the Somme.'

Again Spenser grunted. The house belonged to Keyes and he was perfectly within his rights to invite whomever he liked. Besides, all this modern rot about hating your enemy was most ungentelemanly and unsoldierly. The only thing was that he would have to keep awake after dinner, which would be trying.

GENERAL Erwin von Taufer came to dine at the villa. Like Keyes, he had a con-

CAVIARE TO THE GENERAL

tempt for the Spanish Army and, although the officers of the garrison had treated him very well, he could not consider them seriously. To dine with a couple of senior British officers was quite another thing. Particularly since they had both fought in the First War, the real war.

His dark suit was shiny, but it was immaculately pressed and brushed; his linen was beautifully starched, and his shoes glittered. In his buttonhole he wore the ribbon of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. As he announced his own name in the German fashion he bowed rigidly. Groping in his memories, he managed to find a few stilted English phrases. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'this is a great honour. I am proud indeed to meet you.'

General Spenser's hand was dry and cold in his. The German sat down and accepted a cocktail from Keyes. As the evening progressed, the rough Spanish wine which Keyes and he were drinking helped to loosen his tongue. The half-forgotten English, which he had painfully learnt as a conscientious young officer, came back with a rush.

'Gentlemen,' von Taufer said, 'the brotherhood of the sword surpasses all. We are both of knightly races and, though enemies once, can eat and drink together in comradeship.' Raising his glass, he gave the prescribed bow to each in turn. Keyes looked surprised, but managed to control himself. One could not expect much else from damned foreigners. They always got mawkish. Spenser said nothing. Von Taufer looked at him with added respect. What a soldier! Anybody could tell that at a glance. It was written all over him. And so correct! That silence was exactly the prescribed etiquette in the presence of his juniors in age and seniority, if not in

rank. It was wonderful to be living as in the old days.

Keyes tried to change the conversation, hoping to make it more interesting, and so soothe Spenser. 'Like me,' he said, 'General Spenser was a cavalryman. Of course, most of our war, he was on the Staff. There was so little scope for our particular arm.'

'So?' Von Taufer bowed courteously. It was evidently intended that he should make polite noises about cavalry warfare. He turned to Spenser. 'Ach, Sir General,' he said, 'what a pity! To be frustrated in that way and to know that your arm was so important. It was the belief of our General Hoffman, who was Chief of Staff to Marshal von Hindenburg, that if the Tommies, forgive me, if the British, had thrown in their cavalry at the Battle of the Somme they would have won the war in six weeks.'

The General stiffened. It was 1951. He had travelled all the way to Morocco and had spent thirty-five years of his life just to have a damned Boche be the first one to confirm his theories. It was too much. It was damned impertinence. One could not accept it from the fellow. It was bad form, too, to be talking shop in the Mess. One would have to give him a flea in his ear and shut him up.

'Possibly,' Spenser said, speaking for the first time for an hour, 'possibly. I've never heard of this fellow Hoffman—thought it was an opera or something. But let me tell you this—if you fellows had had the slightest knowledge of how to use cavalry properly in August 1914, you'd have won the campaign in a month.'

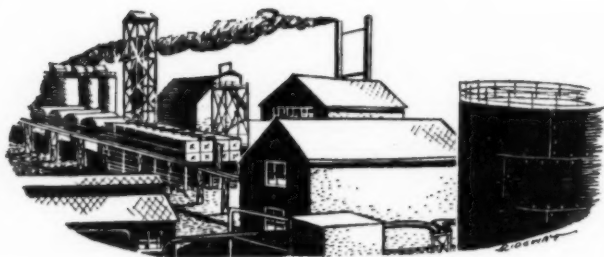
Von Taufer opened his mouth to speak. They might have a most interesting discussion. He had to close it again. General Spenser was fast asleep.

Adjustment

(Rufinus—date unknown. Greek Anthology, V, 88)

*Linkboy Eros, in love's name,
If you can't divide your flame
Equally between us two,
This is what I'd have you do:
Either put it out, or let her
Go, and give me someone better.*

DENIS TURNER.



Scotland's Precious Stream

New-found Lowland Shale-oil Wealth

JOHN NEWELL

VERY few people, even Lowland Scotsmen who know and love their native land, realise that below the smiling countryside and the busy towns and villages of the Lothians there lies a newly discovered and tremendous source of wealth. The Geological Survey together with mining experts have located an immense oil-shale field. Its area is computed to be about 200 square miles, reaching as far as Airdrie in the west from the Lothians.

It is not surprising that this field has only recently been discovered, for the deposits lie at anything from 2000 to 4000 feet below the surface. To reach them will tax even the ingenuity of Scottish engineers, for our deepest coal-mine is just over 3000 feet. But Airdrie's well-hidden El Dorado is of such vital importance to a country always anxious about its oil supplies, and to a world where some experts say that the known oil reserves will be nearly exhausted by the end of the century, that we may be certain that the new field will be tapped.

Those who bewail the possibility of still more slag-heaps despoiling this countryside can take heart from the news that there may be no such desecration of natural beauty when Airdrie yields its liquid gold. There may, indeed, be nothing more than a few slim towers and a scattered series of small processing plants. This is because one possible way to overcome the expense of sinking shafts to 4000 feet is to extract the shale-oil electrically.

The method has already been tried out in Sweden, where it has successfully extracted oil from shallow fields. The system is the invention of a Swedish mining-engineer, Dr F. Ljungstrom, and it uses electricity to cook the shale. Narrow hollow pipes are sunk into the shale at regular intervals until the area is covered by a geometrical pattern of them. In the centre of the area a wider pipe is then sunk. This is used for the extraction of the heavy gases which emerge when powerful electrical resistances are lowered to the bottom of the other pipes and cause intense heat, literally cooking the shale in its bed.

LARGE as the potential yield of the new oil-field is, Scotland already has a claim to be quite an important oil-producing country. I was amused to listen to a conversation in the bus to Dundee last July at the height of the Persian oil crisis. The passengers seemed to think that the convenience of their transport depended on fuel-oil from overseas. Actually, that bus, like most of those running on the east coast from the Border as far as Aberdeen, burned diesel-oil produced in Scotland.

Some four thousand miners, technicians, and chemists work in the Scottish shale-oil industry at present. They deal with about $1\frac{1}{2}$ million tons of shale every year, and, apart from the fuel-oil, there are many invaluable

SCOTLAND'S PRECIOUS STREAM

by-products—wax for polishes, coke, artificial fertilisers, drugs, and the ingredients which have made soapless detergents so popular with the housewife; and in time the ugly slag-heaps may disappear from the Lothian plains and become transformed into attractive little cottages, for the pinkish man-made mountains provide first-rate material for bricks, now being produced at the rate of some 20 million a year.

IT is appropriate that this year should mark the discovery of a big new Scottish oil-shale deposit, for it was one hundred years ago that a Glasgow chemist found a method of distilling oil from shale. He was Dr James Young, and he is entitled to the name of Father of the World's Oil Industry. The letter which started Dr Young's investigations has been preserved. It was written by Lord Playfair, a personal friend of Dr Young.

'My dear Young,' Lord Playfair wrote, 'You know the mineral naphtha is a rare natural product, no spring of it occurring in this country, all being imported from the Continent and Persia. Lately a spring of this valuable product has been discovered on an estate belonging to my brother-in-law, Mr Oakes, near Alfreton, Derbyshire. It yields at present about 300 gallons daily. The naphtha is about the consistency of treacle, and with one distillation it gives a clear, colourless liquid of brilliant illuminating power. It dissolves caoutchouc easily. My brother-in-law intends to set up stills for it, but as they are ironmasters this would be a separate industry, so I have advised them, if possible, to sell the naphtha in the crude state to chemical manufacturers, and thus avoid carrying on an industry foreign to their occupation. Does this possibly come within the province of your work? If it does I will send you a gallon for examination. Perhaps you could make a capital thing out of it and enable my friends to do the same.'

The sample gallon was sent. Dr Young set up a small refinery, and in a short time was able to give Lord Playfair some wax impregnated with the light oil he obtained. Made into candles, this paraffin-wax brightly illuminated the rostrum at the Royal Institution in London when Playfair gave his famous lecture on 'Petroleum and its Products.'

A new source of light had been discovered. Previously, rushlights, candles made from

tallow or sperm-oil, and, for the wealthy in the towns, the new coal-gas, were the forms of light for most people. All were very expensive, and in Scotland a piece of resinous pine-wood, or a sea-bird with a wick drawn through its body, was the usual glimmering illumination for the ordinary country-folk. Thanks to their compatriot at Glasgow, Dr Young, all this was changed. His success was marked by that supreme hall-mark of popular fame—a nickname. To everyone in Victorian Britain the chemist was known as Paraffin Young.

THE oil-spring in Derbyshire dried up after a year or two, and Young then turned to coal and shale. He was successful in distilling oil from both. Scotland became a great mineral-oil producing country. It retained this pre-eminence until 1859, when the Pennsylvanian oil-strike was made, and there started a flood of cheap, natural oil. Even so, difficulties of transport and processing enabled the Scottish industry to expand steadily, particularly after the paraffin-oil lamp was invented. This prosperity continued into the first decade of the present century, when annual production of Scottish oil-shale was more than 3 million tons.

After the First World War bad times set in. The rather costly process of distillation made competition with natural oil prohibitive, and many shale-mines were closed. Tardily the Government relieved some of the duty on home-produced oil and the situation was saved. Now, by amalgamation into a company, which is part of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the twelve mines still operating are a byword for efficiency. A notable point is that the miners seem to find conditions entirely to their liking, and even though their wages are not so high as in the neighbouring coal-pits it is rare for a shale-miner to transfer to coal. A strike is a rarity.

Oil-shale mining is hard work, because the dark, rather beautiful material is very tough, and can be removed only by blasting. Dangers exist, of course, as they do in all forms of mining, but the risks do not appear to be so great as in coal, and the dreaded lung diseases from dust are hardly known.

The refineries and distillation plants are at Westwood and Pumpherston, and the imaginative visitor to these quite modest producers of wealth and power for Scotland can find much

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food for thought in their possible appearance in a few years time when the new field is being fully exploited.

Many of the industrialists and chemists I have talked to are optimistic about the probabilities. Like most of their kind, they do not regard the great depth of the deposits as an insuperable obstacle. They are confident that human ingenuity will overcome it. Miners' leaders in Lanark and the Lothians are also watching developments with hope. The exhaustion of many coal-mines in the area and the policy of closing many of them which is being followed by the National Coal Board

produces a disastrous situation for a class of worker who does not take kindly to moving himself and his family to a strange district.

The Airdrie shale may well give him all the work he and his fellow coal-miners can do, right in their own district, and for the industries of the Scottish Lowlands the existence of a flourishing oil industry will, of course, be of inestimable value. Indeed, it need not be dismissed as wishful thinking to suggest that the position of Scotland as one of the world's great oil producers, which she held a century ago, when Paraffin Young was alive, may be emulated in the next ten years.



Mechanical Mathematicians

The Marvel of ACE

LANGSTON DAY

THE astonishing pilot model, now at work in the National Physical Laboratory, of the automatic computing-machine known as ACE is the direct descendant of a machine devised by a British inventor who lived in the days of our great-grandfathers and who nearly wrecked his health and ruined himself in trying to do something which was a hundred and twenty years ahead of his time. Both Pascal and Leibniz made machines for arithmetical calculations, but it was Charles Babbage (1792-1871) who hit on some of the key ideas which are common to the electronic brains of to-day.

Babbage's first apparatus, the Difference Engine, was offered to the Government, and at their request was investigated by the Royal Society in 1822, when it was in the blueprint stage. The Society reported favourably, whereupon the Chancellor of the Exchequer

made Babbage a grant of £1500 'to enable him to bring his invention to perfection in the manner recommended.' Greatly encouraged, Babbage set to work at once. Special tools had to be made and workmen educated to carry out the extremely intricate work. Four years passed and Babbage admitted having spent £6000; but again the Royal Society reported favourably on the progress, predicting a happy ending to the story.

By 1829, however, things had become so serious that some of Babbage's friends, including the Duke of Somerset, Lord Ashley, and Sir John Herschel, met and reported that £7000 had been spent, of which the Government had advanced only £3000. They said that the inventor's health had already suffered and that unless further help were given both his health and fortune would be ruined. The Duke of Wellington advised an additional

MECHANICAL MATHEMATICIANS

grant of £3000 to finish the machine, and this was given. The work was transferred to a fireproof building in Babbage's garden in Dorset Street. Not long after this the amount spent stood at £17,000, much of which had come out of Babbage's own pocket, and his foreman, after making extravagant demands which could not be met, withdrew in a huff, taking with him many of the tools. Work now came to a standstill.

However, by this time Babbage had conceived an even better idea than his Difference Engine, which had been designed to calculate and print mathematical tables. 'For 6 months,' he said in a letter laid before the Academy of Sciences at Brussels, 'I have been engaged in making the drawings of a calculating-machine of far greater power than the first. . . . This machine is intended to contain 100 variables, or numbers susceptible of changing, and each of these numbers may consist of 25 figures. The greatest difficulties have been surmounted and plans will be furnished in 6 months.' This new apparatus, which he called the Analytical Engine, introduced the principle of feeding problems by means of punched cards. According to Babbage it could weave algebraical patterns. To our great-grandfathers it seemed completely visionary, but to-day its principles have been realised in full.

In 1842, nine years after work had been suspended on the Difference Engine, the Government at last decided to cut its losses, and to soften the blow the half-completed machine was offered to the disappointed inventor. Babbage refused it, and since 1843 it has been in King's College museum. It is able to calculate with perfect accuracy and precision to five figures and two orders of differences, but no part of the proposed machinery for printing mathematical tables was ever made. In the same museum are four hundred large folio sheets of mechanical notations and five volumes of sketches for the construction of Babbage's Analytical Engine. This, too, was never made, but it is the true forerunner of the marvellous electronic calculators which have been developed in Great Britain during the last ten years.

The basic conception of the so-called electronic brain was described by Dr A. M. Turing, now at Manchester University, in 1936. The War interrupted the work which followed from this, but in 1945 it was resumed by several brilliant scientists of the National

Physical Laboratory, who were soon joined by Dr Turing himself. The result of this work is the pilot model which is at present operating in the National Physical Laboratory. A still more elaborate model known as ACE will eventually be built, but for the sake of brevity I shall refer to the pilot model as ACE from now onwards.

ACE has 800 valves, occupies about 60 square feet, and costs £40,000. It has a 'memory,' and, unlike some electronic brains, it is so versatile that it can tackle any problem whatsoever which requires arithmetical calculation. It is, in fact, one of the fastest and most powerful computing-machines in the world.

For what purposes will it be used? As science, industry, and administration grow more elaborate, there arise arithmetical problems which become more and more numerous and complicated. Even with desk-calculators it is almost, if not quite, impossible to carry out the herculean labours of arithmetic. Some problems may take weeks or even months to work out, and when at last the work has been done it is extremely difficult to check the accuracy of the result.

Take, for instance, the manufacture of lenses. To improve the design of a lens the best that can be done is to make an informed guess and then work out the paths of the light-rays through the lens thus modified. With ten refracting surfaces the calculations might take a man about eight days working seven hours a day. ACE does it in under fifteen minutes. The first time a lens problem was worked out the preparations for feeding the problem to ACE took a whole week, but once this was done the machine was ready to work out any problem of lens design without having to go through such a tedious preliminary again. If any scientist wishes to pose a lens problem now, all he has to do is to take a pack of punched cards out of the National Physical Laboratory Library and the answer will be provided in a few minutes.

Another class of problem which involves tremendous calculations is that concerned with the safety of civil aircraft, such as wing-tip flutter, or wing design. There might be fifty equations each of which contains as many as fifty unknown quantities. With a desk-calculator a single trained computer would take a matter of six or seven months.

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ACE will do the work in under ten minutes.

Other problems which ACE will be asked to tackle are those connected with surveying, radar navigational charts, load distribution in electrical grids, and crystallography. In working out the structure of substances like penicillin or vitamin B₁₂, crystallographers find themselves bogged down in quagmires of wearisome calculation. There are other scientific fields, such as those relating to the structure of the atom, where the calculations are so immense that they have never been attempted at all. ACE and its successors may give us knowledge which could not have been arrived at in any other way.

A few more examples will give some idea of the almost magical speed with which ACE works. Take the multiplication of 3,971,428,732 by 8,167,292,438. A skilled arithmetician could work out the result with pencil and paper in about eight minutes, while a desk-calculator could do it in about one minute. ACE will do it in about one five-hundredth of a second. In one minute it will give the correct answer to a problem which would occupy a mathematician for a month. In fifteen minutes it can do a calculation which by hand would fill 500,000 sheets of foolscap!

This almost incredible speed is achieved because ACE belongs to the electronic world, a world which uses a different time-scale. Pulses of electricity are generated at the rate of a million a second, so that you can imagine a sort of gate through which a procession of figures pass at the rate of one per millionth of a second.

IN ordinary calculations we use the figures 1 to 9, plus the figure 0. ACE uses only 1 and 0. Each pulse represents the figure 1, while the gaps between pulses represent 0. When a sum is fed into the machine it is first translated into this binary scale, and after the calculation has been done it is translated back again into ordinary numbers.

When we were at school we used to say: '6 times 2 is 12. Put down 2 and carry 1.' We tucked away '1' in our memory, and brought it out again later. ACE does exactly the same, but on a far more elaborate scale. The way in which it does this is surely one of the most extraordinary achievements in the history of invention. The 'carry 1's' are shunted into closed loops where they fly round and round, for hours if necessary, ready to issue copies of

themselves whenever required. If they were left as electrical impulses travelling with the speed of lightning they would need loops of about 186 miles in circumference. To overcome this difficulty the impulses are converted into ultrasonic waves, which are 100,000 times slower, vibrating in a column of mercury.

Babbage's Analytical Engine was designed to work with punched cards. ACE also works in this way. The holes punched in the cards set the arithmetical problem, and the cards are fed into a specially adapted accounting-machine connected to ACE. The holes start momentary electric currents which release trains of pulses, and these trains are stored in the memory loops.

As soon as ACE is loaded up with numbers and instructions it obediently sets to work. Like the jinnee in the bottle, it is the perfect, uncomplaining slave. When its work is done it passes the results back to the accounting-machine, which punches another set of cards and translates the punched holes into ordinary printed numerals. The result, no matter how intricate the problem, is nearly always correct, but not quite invariably so. Even ACE is apt to make mistakes, but by a further highly ingenious technique these mistakes can be discovered and corrected.

Curiously enough, the mechanism which controls the sequence of the calculations is far more complicated than the calculating mechanism itself, and the briefing of the machine by punching the instruction cards is a highly specialised job which needs considerable mathematical ingenuity. To assist those who wish to make use of ACE, instruction programmes for standard calculations are worked out and filed in the form of prefabricated units. If you wish to set ACE to work on some particular programme you assemble a number of these prefabricated units and link them together in a special way. As time goes on, the library will accumulate more and more of these units, so that ACE can be set to solve the most highly involved problems at a moment's notice.

Much was learnt in the building of ACE, and more still will be learnt from its use. When the full-scale model is built it will probably be the most advanced electronic brain the world has yet seen. Certain parts will be redesigned to make it more reliable, it will work even faster, and its memory will be greatly increased by the addition of an auxiliary, magnetic-recording, storage system.



Angram Folly

PHYLLIS BENTLEY

(From the author's forthcoming *Panorama*)

II

[I—In the 1870s the tyrannical John Angram is proprietor of the Valley Mills, near Hudley, in the West Riding, and lives at Ashbrow, a residence somewhat withdrawn from the works. He is a widower, his sister Sarah keeping house, and he has two sons, James, the elder, and Edmund, both in the mill. Edmund, mild by nature, yields meekly to his father's domination, but James, strong, and even noble, in character, resists it, and, following a quarrel about his making the firm a member of a new local Smoke Prevention Association, he leaves home. In difficulties for a livelihood, he is befriended by old neighbours of the Angrams, the Greenups of Clough Edge House, Mrs Greenup, a widow, being owner of Clough Edge Mills and mother of two daughters, Elizabeth the elder and a boyhood sweetheart of James, and Nessie; James becomes manager of Clough Edge Mills and presently marries Elizabeth. Partly in jest and partly in revenge, the father Angram secretly sets the Smoke Prevention Association in motion against the Clough Edge Mills, and James, convicted, decides to build a taller and better-sited chimney. Only when it is pointed

out that the chimney will ruin his father's view and his action be regarded as one of revenge does he get to know of his father's instigation of the prosecution. He retaliates by vitriolic pamphlets against his father but determines to go on with the chimney, a chimney, however, that will be no eyesore but a thing of architectural beauty.]

MEANWHILE the Folly began to rise. And as it soared James Angram, too, seemed daily further removed from the solid ground of everyday life. At first he had promised Elizabeth that the building of the tower should be kept well within their means; then, when the tide of expenditure rose, Elizabeth expostulated with her husband on behalf of their little son. For a time James was restored to a normal humour by the baby's playful ways, but soon he strayed away again. The plans of the lovely tower, so slender, so graceful, so decorative, lay always on his desk; he had for the most part designed the structure himself, and could never resist telling the most casual caller so. Hundreds of pounds swelled into

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thousands; the mill was mortgaged, the land was mortgaged, the house was mortgaged, to pay the mounting tide of bills. James did not confess this to his wife, but she guessed it; she aged daily in the next few years. From time to time she nerved herself to a further effort, went into James's study where he sat, his wild eyes gleaming, scribbling the vitriolic words of another pamphlet and chuckling as he wrote, and begged him for the child's sake to retrench, to abandon the tower, to give up the outer casing, to sacrifice the decorative galleries at least, to exercise a stricter supervision over the expenses. James frowned and muttered, turning aside. 'You must trust me, Elizabeth,' he concluded peevishly.

'But Baby Lucius,' began his unhappy wife.

'Lucius will inherit the finest mill chimney in the kingdom. If only all mill chimneys were as beautiful as ours,' pleaded James earnestly, 'think, Elizabeth, how beautiful a city Hudley would be!'

It was true, and Elizabeth could not deny it, and, noble soul that she was, she found the attempt to draw her husband's attention down from the beauty of his tower to the cost of it distasteful. So whether the tower rose fast or slow, Elizabeth suffered. When it rose fast, James's debt rose fast too; when it rose slowly, James fretted himself into a fever. Although at an age when she should have been beautiful in her youthful wifely happiness, grey began to appear in Elizabeth's hair, her cheek paled, her body shrank; in repose, her face wore an expression of subdued fear, which her husband's voice startled into mingled love and anguish.

She had other troubles on her hands, too, for as the tower grew her mother's spirit sank, and when the soaring rod blossomed into pillars and pinnacles, Mrs Greenup, unable any longer to pretend that the edifice was merely a slightly unusual chimney, unable any longer to foresee a bright future for her daughter, died—one might say of discouragement.

Nessie, too, lovely wilful Nessie, was become restless and dissatisfied. Nessie was not afraid about the chimney—oh no, rather the contrary. She tossed her beautiful head and said that James was right. Why should not mill chimneys be beautiful? In any case James had the right to build his chimney as he liked. She despised the petty timid grovelling mercenary millowners who criticised him. People should be brave, should do as they wished, should have the courage of their con-

victions. There was a bitterness in her tone as she spoke, which Elizabeth did not quite understand; nor did she understand why Nessie refused so rigorously all her many suitors.

Elizabeth longed for Nessie to leave Clough Edge House, where day by day the shadow of James's obsession deepened; Nessie must escape into the heavenly normal sunshine, Nessie must marry. But Nessie frowned when Elizabeth spoke, gently and delicately, on this subject; she tossed her golden hair and rejected another lover. Then presently she began to hint that she was ill, she must leave the harsh winds of Hudley and seek a milder, kinder climate. She must go to the south coast, or she must go to London. All in a moment, as it seemed to the unhappy Elizabeth, she had secured a post as governess in Southstone-on-Sea. Nessie a governess! That bright wilful head bent in meek obedience to an employer, those sparkling blue eyes turned upon blotted copybooks! Elizabeth in misery ran to James, who for once was startled from his preoccupation. 'Nessie wants to leave us!' he cried. 'Surely you don't imagine any diminution in our love for you, Nessie?'

'No, James, I don't imagine that,' said Nessie.

'Then why go? Why leave us? Why leave Elizabeth? And your little godson?'

'I shall be sorry to leave Baby Lucius,' said Nessie. 'But James, I must go.'

'It will be a great grief to Elizabeth, Nessie,' pleaded James. 'And a sadness to myself. Besides, you won't see the chimney completed. Stay with us, Nessie, till it is done.'

At this Elizabeth, glancing from her husband's face to Nessie's—the one so ravaged, so fretted by obsession, the other having lately taken on a strangely brittle beauty—felt as if her heart would break. Luckily the little Lucius thrived and made a golden gleam in her dark world.

MEANWHILE, how did John Ingram view the chimney?

With spluttering fury. Visitors to Ashbrow were all invited to the windows to inspect the abomination—which certainly drew a line down the central panel of the Ashbrow horizon—and into the grounds to listen to the voices of the workmen, which as the chimney rose rang very clearly into Ashbrow across the

clough. Edmund—Miss Sarah having passed away a year or two before—was called on to sympathise about the tower a dozen times a day. It was not only the spoiling, as he considered it, of his view which vexed John Angram; secretly I think he was upset by the unusual nature of the building. An ornamented mill chimney seemed to him absurd, preposterous, silly, unheard-of, essentially what we should nowadays describe as sissy, and even a little mad. 'It's such a piece of folly,' he grumbled uneasily to Edmund. 'I can't think what your brother's thinking of, to make himself such a fool.' It was probably from this utterance, innumerable times repeated, that the name of Angram Folly derived.

From the outset of the quarrel Edmund had been forbidden by his father to see or to communicate with James. As usual he obeyed. Edmund had now become what we should call an inhibited neurotic by continual fearful compliance with what he imagined to be his father's demands. The lines on his face from nose to mouth grew very deep for so young a man, his chin receded, his pale eyes wore an habitual look of strain. To the casual visitor his personality appeared colourless; those who remained with him longer became aware of a deep uneasiness which he seemed, even when still and silent, to diffuse around him. Oddly enough, in person he became very plump; he soon grew, too, a trifle bald; his hands, white and well-kept, revealed unusual markings, the main lines breaking off abruptly in mid-career.

Edmund had no hobbies and few friends. He went out little into Hudley society. In earlier days when he had attempted social life, he had found himself continually shouted at—'Where are you going?', 'I never heard of such a thing,' 'Gallivanting about the country—in my young days my father would have thought such an idea mad,' 'This is a nice time to come home,' 'Who's going to pay for it, I'd like to know,' and so on. So he gave it up—it seemed easier to do so, as more pleasing to his father. Accordingly it struck him as unfair when his father presently began to press him to get married. 'Don't you know any girls? Why don't you go out and find one? Don't be a muff, Edmund!' began to be John Angram's chorus. 'I want a grandchild to leave the property to, you know,' he usually concluded in a vexed uneasy tone.

'James has a son, Father,' ventured Edmund

once in reply. 'Ventured' is the word, for Edmund had needed to nerve himself to the utterance by a vow. 'The next time he speaks of a grandchild I'll mention Lucius,' he had told himself. 'It's only fair. Besides . . . Anyway, I swear I will.' So, though his stomach turned over and sweat stood on his brow when the moment came as father and son sat together one Sunday afternoon, he dug his nails into the palms of his hands and in a high stiff choking voice brought out the promised sentence.

'What!' bellowed his father.

'Or so I understand,' stammered Edmund hastily.

'Did James put you up to saying that, eh?' shouted John Angram, thrusting his crimson face close to Edmund's.

'No, no.'

'Have you been seeing James lately?'

'No, Father.'

'When did you last see him, eh?'

'I've never seen him since he left Ashbrow.'

'Never. You're sure of that?'

'Perfectly sure, Father.'

'A son, eh?'

'His name is Lucius,' whispered Edmund.

'How do you know that if you haven't seen James?'

'Nessie Greenup told me.'

'Nessie Greenup!' roared his father. He went off into a tirade of violent abuse of the Greenups and all their works.

'I simply met her at a friend's house at a party,' explained Edmund in a trembling voice.

His father grunted. 'I shan't leave owt to James or his son,' he said, flipping his thumb nails against each other, 'unless you disappoint me, Edmund.'

'I don't wish to rob James, Father,' shrilled Edmund—the speech was an act of real heroism.

'Rob James! James has nothing to be robbed of as far as I know,' said John Angram contemptuously. 'Except yon Folly. Neither of you has anything except what I choose to give you, think on.'

Edmund sighed and made no reply.

After a time, when his father's mood seemed to have grown calmer, he remarked in a quavering tone: 'I thought of going over to France next week, Father. Or would you rather I deferred it till a week later?'

'Nay, I don't mind which,' said his father indifferently. 'Write and give our agent there good warning, that's all. I don't see myself

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what good you do by going, but he seems to like it.'

Edmund cleared his throat. 'Next Monday, then?'

'I've told you already—fix it as you like.'

Edmund, humming softly to himself, rose, carefully setting back his chair. 'I'll go write the letter now,' he said.

THE Folly was five years abuilding. By the time the structure reached the final pinnacle there was nothing in the world James Angram could call his own.

On the day the last stone was laid in place James held an opening ceremony at the foot of the tower. The workers from Clough Edge dyehouse, and the stonemasons, stood around him in respectful silence while he spoke eloquently of the new era of industrial beauty to be inaugurated by the chimney. They listened doubtfully, gazing the while at his wild eyes, his haggard face, his greying hair. In their view he was mad, but a real gentleman, a very fine chap gone the wrong way. Mrs Angram was a real lady, too, and they were right down sorry for her, while Baby Lucius was champion. But what was to become of them all, goodness knew. However, thought the masons, brightening as they eyed their handiwork, the tower was a bit of fine workmanship, anyway, which would last a couple of centuries. The dyeworkers shook their heads and felt gloomier the higher they looked. What sort of a thing was that to be tacked on to a decent mill?

'It'll never be a mill chimney,' one muttered.

As the underground passage from boiler to tower was not yet completed, there was time for his prophecy to be fulfilled, and James, who had overheard it, looked at the speaker angrily. 'In a few months the chimney will be in action,' he stated in his firm resonant tones.

'Aye. Happen. But it won't never be a mill chimney—not a right chimney.'

'Nonsense!' cried James. 'Clough Edge dyeworks will be famous throughout the land—throughout the world—as a pioneer of the new industrial age.'

'I'm sure we hope so for your sake, Mester Angram,' said his foreman courteously. 'And we congratulate you on finishing it, like.'

'Aye. That's right. We do.'

'The rest of the day is a holiday for you men. Any who wish to climb the chimney are at full liberty to do so. We'll lead the way, shall

we?' said James, turning towards the architect.

The Clough Edge men hung back, coughed, looked sheepishly at each other. Finally the foreman said dubiously: 'Well, I don't mind if I do.'

There was a sudden rush for the entrance.

'How many steps are there, lads?'

'Count 'em and see.'

'Is there four hundred?'

'Pretty nigh. Guess again.'

'Knowing Mester Angram, I should say there was one for every day of the year.'

'Tha'd be right, lad.'

'Will it be dark inside, like?'

'Nay, there's lancet-windows—slits in t'wall.'

After the long hot climb it was pleasant to come out into the fresh air and sunshine of the gallery platform. It was a clear March day; a strong wind was blowing white clouds across a blue sky. The view between the pillars was certainly glorious. A vast prospect of massive rolling hills—green at the foot, sepia at the rocky top, fringed with the dark growth of trees, divided by clear swift narrow streams—astonished and delighted the climbers. Their opinion of James Angram's present state and future prospects brightened noticeably.

'It's champion, Mester Angram.'

'Aye. It is that.'

'I don't see myself why chimneys shouldn't be ornamented a bit if folk like 'em that way.'

'Nor I. It's a grand place for a view, anyway.'

James, the wind blowing through his thick greying locks, tossed back his head and smiled. For him it was a moment of complete happiness. So much at least he won for himself.

The climbers descended, the workmen went off for their holiday, James drew the architect with him into Clough Edge Mills to discuss some financial matters. It struck the architect, as he told Elizabeth later, that James seemed more normal than for some time past. Would he perhaps revert to sanity now the tower was built, would his obsession vanish now it had fulfilled itself? The architect heartily hoped so, as, talking cheerfully if still a trifle excitedly, James led the way into the mill and unlocked the door of his private office. He asked his visitor to be seated and to excuse him for a moment, and, turning to his desk, he glanced rapidly through some letters which had been placed there. Suddenly he gave a loud cry and fell forward. The architect sprang to catch him, and eased him

to a chair, then called wildly for help and sent the foreman for the nearest physician. But medical aid was useless, for James was already dead. The paper in his hand was the notice of another smoke prosecution.

WHEN his lawyer came to read the will and look into James's affairs, these were found to be not in the least involved, but perfectly straightforward and simple; everything was mortgaged to the bank which had lent him the money to pay for the Folly. But James had been an honourable man. Half of old Mrs Greenup's property had of course belonged to Nessie, and though James had borrowed it, he had scrupulously secured its title to her. His estate was liable for the interest. Nessie did not come north for the funeral, which wounded Elizabeth, but a Southstone lawyer wrote perfectly clear and firm instructions to his Hudley colleagues, offering generous sacrifices on her behalf. In the end it was all settled satisfactorily. The architect and the building contractors were paid in full; the bank took the mill, the business, and Clough Edge House with its grounds and Folly; Elizabeth and Nessie were left with a tiny pittance to live on.

Elizabeth begged Nessie to return to Hudley and live with her, but Nessie declined and begged Elizabeth to go to Southstone. Elizabeth at first declined, but when it became known that John Angram had purchased from the bank all the Clough Edge property including the Folly, Elizabeth for the first time in her life broke into passionate weeping. For an hour she sobbed her heart out, then rose and began preparations to leave Hudley. It must have been a strange meeting between the sisters.

AS soon as old John Angram got possession of the Folly he sought for a contractor to pull it down. He had some difficulty in finding one willing to do so, and meanwhile the matter leaked out into the local newspapers. At once a storm broke about John Angram's head. During the bank's tenure of the Folly they had put up a placard offering admission to the tower at a few pence a time, and an astonishing number of Hudley citizens had taken advantage of the offer. Now it appeared that the Hudley citizens liked the Folly; it was handsome, it was unique, no

other town had anything like it. To use it as a chimney would be preposterous, said public opinion, but as a landmark it was entirely admirable—why, it was visible for miles! Half-a-dozen towns and villages could see it from their doorstep, and seeing it, think: 'There stands Hudley.' It was positively an advertisement for the town. It was a work of art, chimed in all the artists and architects; it gave a grand view, anyhow, said the ordinary man. Old John Angram had treated his son badly, murmured public opinion. Look at those pamphlets! There had been dirty work in those smoke prosecutions, remember? Everyone spoke a good word for Elizabeth and James, none for John Angram. And look at Edmund! Flaccid, vacillating—no spirit left in him. That told its tale. The columns of the Hudley newspapers overflowed with letters about the Folly from indignant citizens, fathers of families, vexed ratepayers. It began to be suggested that the town should buy the tower, or, better still, that John Angram should make a present of it to Hudley—he could well afford it.

John Angram was astonished by this public agitation. Being pilloried in one's local press is never a pleasant experience, but I think in a way he was not wholly displeased. The Folly was regarded as an asset to the town? Then James had not been such a fool after all. He let it be known through Edmund that if the Town Council had anything to say to him about the tower he would listen to them. A deputation was arranged and the date fixed.

But on the very morning when he was to receive the deputation old John Angram was found dead at the foot of the tower. Yes, his neck and many of his bones were broken; yes, he had fallen, it was thought, from the pillared gallery, two hundred and fifty feet above the ground.

EDMUND, giving evidence at the inquest, stated that on the previous evening his father had spoken repeatedly of the Folly, which was to be the subject of a meeting between John Angram and a committee of the Hudley Council at twelve o'clock on the morning of his death. His father seemed restless and uneasy, rising from his chair often to stare out of the window at the chimney, which soared like a delicately cut pencil against the soft blue of the evening sky. 'I've never been near the damned chimney,'

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he grumbled. 'I've never really seen the thing. What's it like, Edmund, eh? It seems you can climb it. Such tomfoolery!'

He repeated these or similar remarks so often that at last Edmund, perceiving, he thought, his father's trend, suggested that they should inspect the tower together, to-morrow, before the meeting. After all, it was folly—Edmund bit his lip and amended his phrase—it would be unwise to enter into negotiations with the Council about a piece of property of whose value he had had no opportunity of forming an opinion. His father, said Edmund at the inquest, had rejected his suggestion at the time. As a matter of fact, he had said: 'Don't be such a pompous ass, Edmund—you mean it's selling a pig in a poke.' But later he had returned to the subject, and admitted frankly that he would like to inspect the tower before the meeting, but did not wish to be seen making the visit.

'We could go early,' suggested Edmund.

'Clough Edge Mills start work at six,' replied his father grimly. 'Do you want to go and get back before six?'

Edmund admitted that the hour would be tiresome, but expressed himself as willing to make the effort.

'Well, I'm not,' said his father bluntly. 'I'm double your age, think on. Happen I'll go at noon—happen I'll make yon councillors climb them three hundred and sixty-five steps.' He chuckled and seemed more at ease for the rest of the evening, and did not refer to the matter again before the two men parted to go to bed.

Early next morning, continued Edmund—at the time he was not sure of the hour, but later judged that it must have been about five o'clock—he was wakened by the howling of a dog. A whimpering bark, often repeated, with long-drawn whines between. He recognised the voice as that of their Dalmatian hound—the remaining unit of the former pair, now very feeble and old. The dog was clearly in distress. After a time, unable to bear the sound of its repeated bark, Edmund rose and went down to the kennels, but the dog was not there. Its anguished whines still filled the air, indeed they seemed to come from some point in the air. Glancing round, Edmund to his astonishment perceived a slight movement at the gallery level of the chimney tower. Although he could not clearly distinguish small objects at that distance, he received a strong impression that it was the white and

black body of the hound which he had seen. He hurriedly threw on a few clothes, and crossed the clough by the footpath towards the tower.

The Coroner: 'Did it not occur to you to call your father, Mr Angram?'

Edmund, after hesitating, replied: 'No.'

The Coroner: 'That seems a little strange. Did it not occur to you, Mr Angram, after what had passed between you, the night before, that your father might have visited the tower alone?'

After a pause, Edmund said hoarsely: 'Yes, it occurred to me.'

The Coroner: 'But you did not make sure that it was so by entering your father's room?'

'No.'

'Ah. The housekeeper thought she heard doors opening, and voices.'

'That was probably earlier, when my father left—he would need to call the dog.'

'Ah. Proceed, if you please, Mr Angram.'

Edmund hesitated, wiped his face with his handkerchief, and blurted suddenly: 'I was afraid that my father had gone. I was afraid that some ill had befallen him. I was afraid to make sure—if you can understand that.'

'Pray just continue with your evidence, Mr Angram,' said the Coroner, but in a kinder tone.

At the foot of the tower, sprawled on his face, lay his father, continued Edmund. It was his impression that life had been extinct for some time before his own arrival. At the Coroner's request he described his father's position, the injuries as far as he could discern them, his own action in running to Clough Edge Mills and sending the foreman off for the doctor. Another workman accompanied him back to the tower, and remained beside the body while he, Edmund, went up the steps and rescued the dog.

'You went yourself—you did not send the workman?'

'I was afraid the dog might turn savage with a stranger in his frenzied condition.'

'Please go on.'

'The dog was tied to a pillar by a loop in his leash. He was jumping up and down in a frenzy of fear, his paws on the parapet, stretching out his head as far as he could get it, looking down towards my father's body.'

'You released the dog and brought him down the tower?'

'Yes, but it was very difficult. The dog was almost mad with distress. He snapped at

my hand as I untied the leash, and had to be dragged down the steps.'

'What did he do on seeing your father's body?'

'He crouched beside it, whining and thrashing his tail about in a peculiar way. When the doctor came I had great difficulty in dragging him away from my father's remains.'

'From the position of the dog in the tower gallery, did you form any impression as to the cause and manner of your father's death?'

'No—that is, not exactly. I thought the dog's gambols might have tripped my father—I thought he might have tied up the dog to prevent what did actually happen, namely that the dog tripped him while he was looking away, out at the view.'

'There were no marks on the parapet—marks indicative of a scuffle?'

'There were no marks at all.'

The inquest proceeded to its close, a verdict of accidental death was recorded, the Coroner expressed his sympathy with Edmund. Hudley recorded the verdict that it was a judgment on old John Angram, the more superstitious allowing their spine to prickle pleasurably at the thought that James's ghost had defended James's tower.

The funeral was held, the roads between Ashbrow and Hudley Parish Church being lined with people who certainly did not attend for love of John Angram. The will, dated some years back, was read. All the property went to Edmund. Hudley shook its head angrily and said again that his death served that old bully right. They hoped Edmund would provide decently for Elizabeth Angram and little Lucius. Those who knew Edmund felt pretty sure that he would; a good fellow at heart, Edmund; not a patch on his brother, of course, but then, whose fault was that? Old John Angram's.

THEN suddenly the scandal broke like a thunderstorm about Edmund's head. Looking cheerful, if a trifle embarrassed, he instructed the Ashbrow housekeeper to prepare for the reception of Mrs Angram, and to accept notice to terminate her post after three months.

'Mrs Angram, sir? Mrs James Angram, do you mean?'

'No,' gulped Edmund. 'I mean my wife.'

'What? Oh, Mr Edmund!'

Stuttering and colouring, Edmund went on

with the tale in response to the housekeeper's astonished questions. It seemed that he had secretly married—had secretly married some years ago—had secretly married some years ago Jessie Greenup. They had a child, a four-year-old daughter, Rosamond. His visits to Paris had been in reality visits to Jessie. . . .

Well, what of it? Those who first heard the story laughed and slapped their thighs. So Edmund had done old John Angram brown after all, had he? Of course John Angram would never have consented to Edmund's marriage with a relative of James. True, it would have been better to defy John Angram in a hearty manly way—true, it was a trifle mean to keep his father's favour under false pretences while his brother lay out in the cold. But then poor Edmund never had any spirit to speak of; he had done the best he could, he had married the girl he loved. Provided he settled something handsome on James's widow and orphan, Hudley would not hold his secret marriage against Edmund.

So ran the gossip for the first twenty-four hours. Then suddenly it took an ugly turn. Possibly the impetus came from the housekeeper, who had not been pleased to have her evidence slighted at the inquest, was not pleased to think of losing her present post. At any rate, strange rumours began to go round the town. What an admirable opportunity to dispose of the old man Edmund would have had, supposing him to have accompanied John Angram to the top of the tower! One swift push, and the deed was done. What an overwhelming motive Edmund had for such a push! John Angram alive, Edmund was parted from his wife, in hourly dread of losing his father's favour, living under the constant threat of becoming abruptly penniless. John Angram dead, Edmund was wealthy and secure. Edmund hadn't the spirit to do it, said some. Ah, said others, it's just those nervous cowardly chaps that do mad things when driven too far. Didn't the housekeeper say she heard doors opening and closing, voices? Was not that more compatible with Edmund and his father's setting out together than with Edmund's story that they each set out alone? What evidence was there that they had not set out together? Only Edmund's. What evidence was there that Edmund had been awakened by the dog's howling? Only Edmund's. The bite on Edmund's hand—could it not just as well have been made by the dog in defence of the father when attacked

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by the son? Did it not seem strange, callous, inhuman, unfilial to say the least, that Edmund left his father's body to fetch down to safety a mere dog? What an overwhelming interest Edmund had in his father's death! How odd his manner had been at the inquest!

Oh, the rumours were nonsense, no doubt. The police took no notice of them, and presumably they were in a position to know best. But the scandal drove Edmund away from the town. It was so acute, so violent, that people cut him in the streets; matrons bristled if he spoke to them, men gave him short literal replies and turned away. A stone or two was thrown at his carriage and quite a few Valley Mills windows were broken. Edmund, poor timid Edmund, could not stand the cold shoulder. He broke down completely when the grounds for it were revealed to him by the family lawyer. He just sold up everything and moved down to Southstone, to Nessie.

So John Angram missed the desire of his life. No Angram dynasty was founded in Hudley; no Angrams lived at Ashbrow, no Angrams owned Valley Mills. Edmund missed the desire of his life, to see Nessie installed as mistress of Ashbrow. James—well, James was the best of the three, and James built his tower; but it was never used as a smoke-conveyor, never set a fashion for decorative chimneys.

SO that's the legend of Angram Folly. Interesting, don't you agree? It's a murder mystery, you think? Edmund probably gave his father the fatal push? Well, naturally I prefer to believe otherwise, since I am his grandson. Yes, the son of Lucius and Rosamond Angram. They grew up together, you know, and married—very happily. No, they were never rich. Edmund lost all the Angram money. Released from the oppression of his father's tyranny, he showed all the conceit of the timid, the rashness of the inexperienced; he ventured too far in stock market speculations.

Yes, I knew my grandparents. My maternal grandfather Edmund I disliked; he seemed querulous and feeble. My grandmother Nessie was a trifle acid in her speech. She never struck me as particularly handsome, though she wore sparkling rings and brooches and gleaming silk frocks, attractive to a child. My mother—Rosamond, Rosie as my father called her—had inherited the long shower of

golden hair, which I adored. She had a sweet playful disposition, submissive, easily led. She was unhappy at home before her marriage, I think, and regarded my father with gratitude as well as love for having rescued her. My paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Angram, lived with us for a time, and for her I had a deep and strong affection. She was good and grave and noble; she gave a small boy a feeling of security and peace. My father Lucius Angram, a fiery fanatical soul like James, always embroiled in some dispute or other, was an architect and surveyor; I chose the same profession.

I knew vaguely of my grandparents' connection with Hudley, and when I saw a partnership in a Hudley firm advertised I felt drawn to the place and took it up. No, I had never heard of Angram Folly before I came. That was natural enough, for it was not a story grandparents would care to tell a child; I don't believe, indeed, that even my father or my mother ever knew it. As a newcomer to Hudley I was at first greatly struck by the architectural beauty of Angram Folly, then I was astonished by its name, then I was moved to learn its tragic story.

I find it quite fascinating. But not as a murder mystery. Edmund wasn't telling the truth at the inquest, I agree—people were right in thinking his confused manner indicated a lie. But it wasn't, I think, murder he was trying to conceal. Edmund was too inhibited to make the actual physical gesture of assault on his father, however much he may have desired to make it, acted it over in his mind. Besides, he wasn't there to give the fatal push. No—I think it happened like this.

John Angram rose very early, meaning to visit his son's Folly alone. He would surprise them all, he thought, chuckling coarsely, have an advantage over them which they did not suspect by visiting the tower secretly and learning its every detail. Edmund was woken by the sound of his father's movements about the house, and in duty bound offered to accompany the old man. Vexed at being discovered in what might appear a sentimental pilgrimage, John Angram shouted at his son to get back to bed, to mind his own business, to leave him alone. Edmund meekly obeyed, as he had always obeyed, and it was this obedience to his father's coarse and abusive command which he was ashamed publicly to confess at the inquest. Edmund had done a good deal of lying since he married Nessie,

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and it came easier to him than an uncomfortable truth. The rest of the story went as he told it. He left his father's body to fetch down the dog because the suspense of waiting to know whether his father were dead or not got on his nerves. Think what a difference it would make to him! He ran away from the suspense, from the ordeal of standing by the body, by running up the tower—John Angram's tyranny had taught Edmund to run away all his life.

No, it isn't as a murder story that the history of Angram Folly has a lasting interest for me. The interest lies in the psychology, in the moral significance, the symbolism, of the tale. The products of undue dominance, as I indicated before, are defiance and com-

pliance. Dominance, defiance, compliance—none of these three is desirable as a permanent human attitude. For defiance itself turns into dominance if too long persisted in; James became a tyrant indeed to poor Elizabeth, and showed no mercy to his father in those scorching pamphlets. As for compliance, appeasement, it turns sour at last. Then what have you? None of the three Angrams was as happy, as useful, as noble as he might have been.

No; dominance, defiance, compliance are none of them worth while. Balance is the thing to strive for—neither undue yielding nor undue demanding. To be firm as to principle, yielding as to personal supremacy, to maintain balance between one's own needs and the demands of others—that's the secret of life.



Maria Theresa's Dollar

JOHN WILLIAMS

IN 1936 Britain's Royal Mint took on an unusual and colourful commission. It began to issue a fine silver coin dated 1780, about the size of our five-shilling piece, bearing on one side the image of a long-dead Hapsburg empress and on the other the double-headed eagle of the Austrian imperial arms. History was in fact being made by the minting, in the very English surroundings of Tower Hill, E.C. 3, of the romantic Maria Theresa dollar.

By 1938 London had coined nine million of these silver pieces, and they were also pouring from the mints of France and Belgium. Then the war came and their issue stopped until 1941, when Bombay, in answer to a fresh demand, issued sixteen million more. This proved to be the final minting of a currency that in the two centuries of its wandering

career had been familiar to traders in over a dozen African and oriental countries stretching from the Atlantic ocean to the China seas.

Esteemed for its high silver content (eighty-three per cent as compared with fifty per cent in our own five-shilling piece) and its size and weight (one ounce), this Imperial Austrian dollar has in its time changed hands in Nigeria and the Gold Coast; North Africa, Egypt, and the Sudan; Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somaliland, and Zanzibar; Arabia's various kingdoms; Madagascar, Persia, and India; and even Mongolia and China. To-day, driven out from its former territories by newer national coinages, it has almost disappeared. Yet still in the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, where it remains the *de facto* currency, provincial Arab merchants transact their

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business with it; and even now it circulates—illegally—in remoter Abyssinia.

THAT Maria Theresa's silver dollar, whose minting had been a Viennese monopoly from 1751 (its first year of issue) to about 1932, should have come in its last few years to be struck in London, Paris, Brussels, and Bombay is the strangest part of its long and eventful story. In fact, the dollar became cosmopolitan in its coining when it stopped being just a medium of international trade and entered the field of international politics, a pawn in the imperialistic designs of Mussolini.

In 1935 the Duce, aware of the dollar's high prestige among the Abyssinians, whom he was preparing to invade, decided that it would be useful if he got entire control of its output himself. He therefore bought the minting equipment from the Austrian government, whose issue of the coin had in the previous few years been small, and started producing Maria Theresa dollars in Rome—silver ammunition which he hoped would back up his bullets in breaking Abyssinian resistance.

Not content with that, he also bought up all the dollars he could from the countries bordering the Red Sea, thus causing a serious shortage in Arabian and other territories. It was then that the Royal Mint came to the rescue, coining for the first time this exotic silver thaler for export to the Middle East. And, as the demand was large, the mints of Paris and Brussels began turning the coin out too. But after 1939 the African and Arab dollar-users could obviously look no longer to the West for their supplies; and shipments came to them instead from Bombay in the East, the last millions of the famous currency that were to issue from any mint.

IF ever a coin belied the tradition that primitive peoples reject money bearing the likeness of a dead ruler, it is the thaler of Maria Theresa. The Empress died in 1780, but in the hundred and seventy years since her death her maternally dignified features have been inseparably present at countless business transactions in lands south and east of the Mediterranean. Native traders would have indeed been foolish to refuse the coin through a mere whim about the portrait appearing on it, for this silver token of the trade of

18th-century Imperial Austria is a fine coin in every way. To high intrinsic value it adds a confidence-inspiring and opulent appearance: it is money that looks and feels like money.

The wording on the dollar is impressive. As a precaution against clipping, its edge is unmilled, containing instead the phrase: *Justitia et Clementia*. And long enough to circle both faces of the coin is the inscription, which, translated from the abbreviated Latin, reads: 'Maria Theresa by the Grace of God, Empress of Rome, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, Archduchess of Austria, Duchess of Burgundy, Countess of the Tyrol, 1780.' This date, the year of the Empress's death, appears on all the coins that have been struck since.

Instituted as one of the financial reforms of that statesmanlike Hapsburg Empress, Maria Theresa, the first Maria Theresa dollars (or thalers) came from the Viennese mint just two hundred years ago. Though they circulated within the Austrian Empire, their real function was as trade money intended for export to those countries with whom Austria had an adverse trade balance. Silver was in itself a desirable commodity, and the handsome silver coins issued by a nation known to have no expansionist designs were readily acceptable to the overseas merchants to whom they were offered.

And no doubt the picturesque new dollar, bearing as it did the image of an illustrious and handsome woman, appealed to the Levantine dealers from the feminine angle too. It is recorded that when a second version of the Empress, wearing a widow's veil, appeared after her husband's death in 1765, the coin's popularity abroad declined and the earlier design had to be restored. But soon the portrait on the coin caught up with reality, and it is, of course, the widowed Empress who is perpetuated in the dollars (dated 1780) struck since her death.

AT first the Maria Theresa dollars were coined from Austria's own silver, mined in the Tyrol, Salzburg, and Bohemia; but soon the considerable demand for the precious metal began to deplete the national sources and large quantities of silver had to be got from the new mines of South America and other places. Records of mintings show that before 1760 between a million and a million-

MARIA THERESA'S DOLLAR

and-a-half dollars were being coined yearly; and in the boom years of 1765 and 1766 the issues jumped to five million. For the next hundred years the average annual minting was between one-quarter and half-a-million.

By the 19th century this distinctive silver thaler of a dead empress was reaching new and distant places—Ottoman Egypt, where it bought cotton; Syria; the Sahara; the Sudan and Eritrean Africa. It found its way to Nigeria and the Gold Coast, where it was said to change hands among the slave-dealers, and along the old oriental trade-routes to far Cathay. And, perhaps more firmly than anywhere else, it established itself in Abyssinia, where, as in Arabia, it was first accepted in payment for consignments of choice and much-favoured Mocha coffee.

Among the Ethiopians the dollar had long been valued as a sound investment. Though banned by the Emperor Menelik in 1896 in favour of his own silver dollar resplendent with the Lion of Judah, and by Mussolini in 1938 in favour of the rust-proof steel currency which he issued on the seventeenth anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome, and officially replaced by the present Ethiopian dollar, it is treasured still in Abyssinia's outlying regions where, circulating surreptitiously or fondly buried beneath the mud-floors of native huts, it retains a semblance of its old and honoured status.

Many travellers in Abyssinia have found that a bag of Maria Theresa dollars has smoothed their path in that country. One Englishman, for example, has told how on a journey there some fifty years ago he armed himself with the sum of fifteen hundred of them; but he noted then how fastidious some of the natives were about the condition of the coins. They would examine them minutely for wear and quite likely refuse those in which the Empress's coiffure or jewellery were less than perfectly defined. However, this traveller discovered that what one man rejected another would accept, and when he finished up at Asmara all his store of dollars had gone except twenty-five—a hard core of unnegotiable coins.

In war, as in peace, the Maria Theresa dollar has in those African regions proved a British ally. With five hundred and forty

thousand dollars, bought from Austria for over £115,000, the British government in 1867 financed the rescue of British captives held by King Theodore of Abyssinia; and in 1885 it was the same currency that aided the expedition sent to Khartum to attempt the relief of General Gordon. The British again used the all-powerful dollar in 1940 to undermine the Italian grip on Abyssinia—just as the Italians themselves employed it in both their Abyssinian campaigns.

Though in 1854 the dollar ceased to be valid within the Austrian Empire, it continued to be issued as exportable trade money in increasing quantities. From mid-century onwards the average annual minting was more than a million, the 1876 and 1896 figures being over five and six million respectively. Up to 1914, when the First World War called a halt, the issues went steadily on, sometimes reaching new high peaks, as, for instance, eight million in 1911; and after 1919, to make up wartime deficiencies in those countries still using the dollar, the Viennese mint coined very large quantities, producing in 1927 no less than fifteen million.

It is perhaps curious that the large and even increasing quantities of Maria Theresa dollars minted since about 1850 should have been absorbed by a gradually decreasing number of countries. But it is a fact that in the 19th century the dollar was banned in the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt, and became obsolete in Tunis and Algeria. Rather later, Ibn Saud of Arabia substituted, not without difficulty, his own rials for it; and in Abyssinia it is, as already noted, now illegal. It is found no longer in Somaliland, Eritrea, or Zanzibar, though as late as 1938 it could be seen in at least one great weekly market in Northern Nigeria, offered for sale by money-changers and fetching the equivalent of six shillings.

To-day, no longer minted, almost totally replaced by newer currencies, the Maria Theresa dollar enjoys but a shadow of its former glory. Alone in a sultanate of eastern Arabia it officially survives, the traditional money of country traders. And one wonders how long it will be before this historic coin disappears from here too, supplanted by the Indian rupee, which now circulates alongside it.

Twice-Told Tales

XI.—The Bloomer Costume

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of November 1851]

SEVERAL spirited ladies of the United States have made their appearance at the head of a movement for the reform of the female dress. A Mrs Bloomer of New York is the literary advocate of the party, and from her it seems likely to take an appellation. Other ladies have begun to act as apostles of the cause, not merely by writing and lecturing, but by exemplifying the new costume on their own persons, appearing as a sign to the people, to use the phrase of Robert Barclay of famous memory, when he walked into the streets of Aberdeen without any dress at all.

The Bloomer reformation has not been well received in this country. By association and otherwise, it excites too much merriment to be held in much respect. Accordingly, some of the apostles have been treated in a manner rather martyrly. This is all very natural. First, there is a great standing absurdity which provokes the wrath of all rational minds. Some one starts off in a crusade against it, and goes to the opposite extreme. The public, tolerant of the first error from habit, hoots the second because it is new, failing to observe the good which is at the bottom of it. So it is that our people see women every day defying common sense and good taste by the length of their skirts, and say little about it, but no sooner observe one or two examples of a dress verging a little too far in an opposite direction, than they raise the shout of a persecuting ridicule. We say there may be some little extravagance in the Bloomer idea, but it is common sense itself in comparison with the monstrous error and evil which it seeks to correct.

That some reform is wanted all the male

part of creation agree. Many of the ladies, too, admit the inconvenience of the long skirts which have been for some years in fashion, though they profess to be unable to break through the rule. Why should not some compromise be entered into? In order to avoid trailing through mud and dust, it is not necessary to dock petticoats and frocks by the knee, or to assume a masculinity in other parts of the attire. Neither is it necessary to connect a rational length of skirt with certain unhappy foolish notions about equal privileges of the sexes, which seems to be one of the mistakes made by the Bloomer party in America. Let there simply be a reduction of the present nuisance, an abbreviation of those trolloping skirts by which even a man walking beside the wearer is not unfrequently defiled. When the hem of the garment is on the level of the ankle, which once was the case, it answers all the purposes of decorum, and is sufficiently cleanly. A return to that fashion would do away with all objection. Or if one or two inches more be taken off, and the void filled by such trousers as are generally worn by young girls, it might be as well, or better. Such changes might be brought about with little fracas, like any of the ordinary changes of fashion.

If the question is between the present skirts and Bloomerism, then we are Bloomerites; for we would rather consent to error in the right direction than the wrong one. If there is folly in a fantastic dissent—such as that of Mrs Bloomer and her friends—there is a far greater self-condemnation of the judgment in adherence to an absurdity which involves filthiness as well as inelegance, like the present long skirts.



The Man who Left Home

J. L. HEPWORTH

AFTER eleven at night it was when my mother came back from visiting her sister. I had finished my supper and I was lying back in an armchair smoking a cigarette. When she came in, I looked at her and said: 'Thought you'd run away, I did. There's tea left and the kettle's boiling.'

But she didn't take off her coat, and that was what made me think something queer was going on. She stood there and she said: 'Your Uncle Bob has left home.'

I sat up then. 'Never,' I said. 'Not Uncle Bob.'

'I waited with your Aunt Annie and he's not come back and he's always home by ten o'clock whenever he goes out.'

My mother was real worried. 'Here,' I told her, 'you'd better sit down first and I'll make a cup and you can tell me what the trouble is.'

I didn't tell her, but I guessed. My Aunt Annie has a long tongue, and Uncle Bob had gotten mad and said he'd go. It was simple enough. I had often wondered why he hadn't said it years before. What I couldn't understand was that he'd gone. My uncle wasn't that sort of man. He thought a lot of his wife and I know she looked after him fine. Only she had to nag him. It was her way, I reckon.

I gave my mother the cup of tea and she told me what I'd guessed already. Only, she told me more than once, and each time it was just a little bit different from the time before. She was certainly worried.

'Now look,' I said. 'There's only one thing for it. By this time, I'm certain my Uncle Bob is back home. You have your tea and we'll walk round there and make sure. And then we can go to bed with peaceful minds.'

My mother wouldn't have that. No, she said, he wouldn't be back. He'd never said he'd go before and he must have meant it.

I put on my collar and tie again and my mother described how Uncle Bob left. And I was proud of him. He left like a conqueror. But by the time we got there, I thought, he'd be back like a slave.

While I had got ready, my mother had drunk the cup of tea I'd given her, and another after it, so I knew she was coming round to my way of thinking. We went out into the quiet street and made for where my aunt lived. It was a wonderful night, and I enjoyed myself walking along and seeing the moonlight achieving the miracle of making soot-blackened walls shine. Folk were mostly abed, and there was a pattern of shadow and light everywhere, and

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the gas-lamps hissing, and somewhere a tinny sort of knocking that must have been a cat with its head caught momentarily in a thrown-out tin.

The sun's world is dirty, but the moon's world is clean. We walked along the narrow streets, and all the Corporation men working together couldn't have made them shine more than the moon did. And all the colours in an artist's stock couldn't have achieved the beauty that the moon managed with black and silver and grey. And even a grate in moonlight has a pattern that makes you want to look at it and admire it.

But we couldn't stop to look at grates. We had to get along. My mother was in a hurry. When my father was alive I've known him say that when he was out with her he never had time to see anything. At any rate, it was no time for me to complain about having to rush.

OUR houses don't have gardens. There's the street and a row of doors, and if you want to go in somewhere, you just stop and knock. At a house that had a light showing we stopped and my mother knocked. I stood back, because no man likes to see another shamed, and I guessed that my Uncle Bob would be feeling he'd like to creep under the carpet—and thinking he could manage it without raising the edge.

My mother went in and I followed, not looking into the room at first, thinking I'd get round to that when I knew the verbal lashes were held off my uncle's back. But when I heard the sound my mother made, I glanced towards the fireplace, and I saw there was no Uncle Bob to be lashed with a tongue. My aunt was sitting there staring at us and her eyes were red and she held a handkerchief balled tight in one hand.

'Oh, Annie,' my mother said, 'we were sure he'd be back and you'd be all right.'

My aunt just shook her head and the tears came afresh. I stood there and stared at the picture of the boyhood of Raleigh that my uncle had saved cigarette-cards for once. I thought of my uncle and I couldn't believe now that this was all real. I was certain he'd be back, and he wasn't, and suddenly I didn't know what to do. I looked from the picture to my mother and then to Aunt Annie. 'Listen,' I said, 'you'll both be all right here. I'm going out. I've got to think about this.

Maybe we should tell the police. But I'll just have a walk round first. I'm still not believing my Uncle Bob has gone out to stay out.'

'But he might do anything,' Aunt Annie said. 'He might even . . .' She wept again.

'No,' I told her. 'Not Uncle Bob. Now you can be sure of that. I reckon he's trailing round yet. I'm going out to look, and if I don't find him, we'll call the police.' I looked at my mother: 'What do you think, lass?' I said. 'I'll only do what you both think is best.' My aunt was sobbing, and my mother just nodded to me. I knew then she was like me. She just couldn't understand this. And she couldn't believe it either.

I WENT out and I walked, slowly, slowly, not seeing the moonlight patterns any more—just trying to understand what had happened. I went through all I'd been told about how my uncle had walked out. I didn't get anywhere with that until I remembered that he'd never said he'd go before. I felt more secure then. I felt that nothing terrible had happened. My uncle had been driven to saying he'd go. And he was a proud man. Once he'd said it, he had to go. He was as proud as that. If my uncle said he could beat a man at doing something, he'd beat him, whether it was training dogs, flying pigeons, or playing dominoes. He might not have wanted to go, I reasoned, but because he was the man he was, that wouldn't have mattered. If it had killed him, he'd have gone.

I went on my way through the streets, not caring where I went, just walking and thinking and not knowing where to look for the man I was seeking. Suppose I was Uncle Bob, I thought. Suppose I'd walked out and said I wouldn't be coming back, where would I have gone? That was a dead-end. I'd no idea.

I tried it another way. I asked myself what I'd need. There was an answer to that one. I'd need a roof over my head eventually. And where would I find a roof? Again, I'd no idea, unless it was at some hotel. But I happened to be on the road that runs past the allotments, and I remembered vaguely that my greenhouse roof leaked in one place. Nothing serious, but it leaked. It's queer how these random thoughts come when you are worrying about something. Just as though they want to torment you by being there when you don't want them. I had been thinking

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about my uncle, and suddenly I was seeing my greenhouse roof. I felt ashamed out there in the silent, deserted road. And then all at once I thought I could find my uncle. If I had ever known him, he would be inside my warm greenhouse, because that was the only place he could go.

It was a funny thing, though, that when I came to that decision I didn't feel any real delight. It would be a comical situation, it was the way of my Uncle Bob, it was the sort of thing he would do. But if the place was silent and empty, then this was a new Uncle Bob who had come to life. This was a stranger who had left us, aye, and would not be welcomed back. And when I walked off the road and towards my bit of land I was not happy. I had said: 'My Uncle Bob will be here. All the years I have known him, all the talks we have had together, all that is between us, this is stronger than the doubt.' But until I could see inside that greenhouse, the doubt remained.

I stopped a yard off the door, and in the moonlight I looked at the lock. And suddenly there was no doubt. The hasp swung free from the staple. I knew my Uncle Bob had used a piece of wire with rare skill again. Once before, when I had forgotten my keys, it was Uncle Bob who had used a piece of wire to defeat the lock.

I opened the door, and there he was, squatting in the darkness of the timbered end where I had my boiler. Behind me the moonlight flooded in to see the finish of this affair.

UNCLE BOB said: 'You've come looking for me, Johnnie?'

'Aye. And I've found you,' I answered, very softly, for I loved him then as never before.

'How's Annie taken it?' he asked.

'She's upset. She doesn't know what happened to you.'

He sighed wearily. 'Aye,' he breathed. 'But I told her I was going, and not coming back. She drove me to it, Johnnie.'

'She's a tongue,' I said. 'But it's a serpent that guards a kind heart.'

There was a silence. Then he said: 'I'm a proud man, Johnnie. I'm too proud, lad. I follow pride into the pond.'

'I'm asking you to come back, Uncle Bob,' I said.

He groaned. Then he muttered: 'I'm beat,

lad. Niver been beat in mi life afore. And now I'm beat. And she'll know. She'll have me and she'll mock me. Not at first, mind. But after. Aye, I know the ways of women.'

I stood there just inside the greenhouse door and I said: 'I want you to tell me something, Uncle Bob. It has to be the truth, from your heart. I'm asking you—do you want to go back?'

I heard the breath catch in his throat. 'There's no man, Johnnie, no man could want anything more.'

It was enough. I was happy. 'Now listen to me,' I told him. 'Listen careful and you'll be all right. Make a mistake in what I tell you and you'll be in trouble.'

'Aye, lad,' he said. 'I'm listening. You're standing there, Johnnie, but it's your father that's talking. And yon man could've beat me at owt, lad. And there were nowt he couldn't teach me.'

'I'm going back now,' I said. 'I'm going alone. You'll follow me in a few minutes. I'm going the shortest way to your house. You'll go the longest. Up the road, round by the railway bridges, along Bank Street, down Cooper Street. That way. Can you remember?' He was puzzled, I knew. But he didn't ask any questions. I think he knew I wouldn't have answered them.

'Now I'm off,' I told him. 'Make no mistakes and you'll keep your pride. And whatever happens, you don't mention this greenhouse.' Then I was away back towards the road, and behind me I heard the lock click as Uncle Bob left the warmth of the boiler for the new mystery of the night.

I WENT back to my aunt's house quickly. I saw them staring at me, Aunt Annie and my mother. My aunt was rolling and unrolling her handkerchief. My mother said: 'Did you . . .?'

When I nodded, I saw their eyes change. I saw disbelief follow despair, and joy follow that.

My aunt stood up. 'He's . . . outside?' she asked. I looked at her, into her eyes. 'No,' I replied. And I saw the triumph go. I knew then I had won, and Uncle Bob had won. Only he didn't know it—yet. I hoped he would be coming along the street, trusting me and keeping his pride.

'He said,' I told them, 'he's fine where he is. Gone for good he vowed to you, and gone

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for good he meant.' I was being cruel to my Aunt Annie, and I was sorry. But then I had to consider my Uncle Bob. She'd often been cruel to him, anyway. 'But there's a way,' I said. 'I reckon you want him back, and this is an easy way to do it.'

I saw my mother looking a bit queer at me. I just carried on talking to my aunt. 'My uncle says that for my sake he'll give you a last chance. I've had to talk to him a long time for him to offer this. He's a proud man, my uncle is, and you've driven him too far.' Nobody spoke. 'I've done my best,' I said. 'He's promised to come, maybe even past the house.' I stared at the picture of Raleigh's boyhood and waited for my aunt to make the

next move. I reckoned my Uncle Bob would be about two hundred yards up the street.

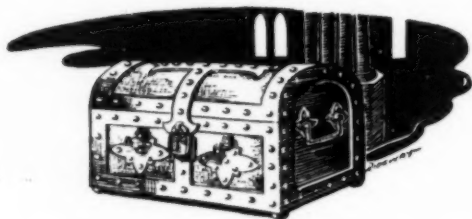
Aunt Annie had her coat on so fast I couldn't see her arms moving. I said: 'Remember, he told me he'd come down from Cooper Street. You've to go that way.' And she was out of the house.

I looked across at my mother. I said: 'We'd better be going. We'll take the other direction, away from them.'

'You know he'll come?' my mother said.

And then I had to smile. 'Aye,' I assured her. 'He'll come.'

Our eyes met. Then she smiled. She understood. She said: 'Good lad.' Just that. And off we went together into the street.



The Romance of the Village Church

IX.—Old Chests

ARTHUR GAUNT, F.R.G.S.

NOWADAYS it is difficult to visualise just how much religious and secular activities mingled during past centuries. True, a remnant of this state of affairs still remains, parish council notices and other announcements relating to affairs not strictly ecclesiastical being displayed in church porches. But in bygone days our village churches were concerned with a far greater amount of civil business.

The keeping of parish registers became compulsory in 1597 by order of Queen Elizabeth, and more than fifty years earlier such records were being kept voluntarily at some churches. The registers not only recorded the births, marriages, and deaths of all parishioners, but also set down the inductions of clerics, the arrivals and departures of these

clergymen, incidents in the parish, disasters, rejoicings, and many similar matters of importance.

Our parish registers, indeed, were detailed diaries of life and conditions throughout several centuries, and they have been invaluable to historians and others wishing to peep back into the past. From these church records, for instance, can be obtained reasonably accurate information on the effects of plague, on weather conditions in the Middle Ages, and on the travels of notabilities both at that period and in later times. We know, for example, that Oliver Cromwell visited Malhamdale, for his signature appears in the registers of Kirkby Malham Church as a wedding witness.

Even private documents were not infre-

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quently deposited with the church, parishioners regarding the churchwardens as the best custodians for wills and family papers. From time to time, records of considerable historical importance continue to be found in our churches. In 1936 a pardon granted to Walter Strickland, of Boynton Hall, was found in Flamborough Church (Yorkshire). It lists his offences during the Commonwealth and is signed by Charles II.

The provision of some safe repository for these various documents inside the church was, therefore, essential, and massive chests were made for the purpose. Strongboxes were provided, in fact, many years before the keeping of parish registers became compulsory, the kists being used also to protect the church plate and richly embroidered vestments.

MANY of these old chests are still to be seen, and, although they served the same utilitarian purpose in each case, they differ greatly in size and design, so they constitute an engrossing subject for study. The oldest were hewn from a single log, and are known as dugout chests. Their crudeness of construction makes them difficult to date accurately, for they were being made as early as pre-Norman times and as comparatively recently as the 15th century, but the majority are of 13th- and 14th-century origin.

An example believed to come from pre-Norman days is preserved at West Grinstead (Sussex), though it now has no lid, and other dugout specimens of somewhat later date are at Tettenhall (Staffordshire) and Orleton (Herefordshire). Warwickshire is particularly rich in this style of chest, and a 9-foot-long example at Shustoke is said to weigh half a ton.

Great weight, in addition to constructional strength, was, in fact, an important attribute of the church chest until recent times. Such coffers had to be made difficult to carry away, as well as hard to open, thus thwarting marauders who might be tempted to remove them bodily and break them open at leisure. Some examples have chains for lifting, and a few are on wheels, but they were made mobile so that they could be moved quickly to a safer spot if danger threatened.

The chapters in the story of the different styles of church chests overlap. Thus, although most of the surviving built-up iron-

bound strongboxes, as distinct from the log-hewn kind, belong to the 14th or 15th centuries, specimens made in the early 13th century can be found. A fine example dating from about seven hundred years ago is at Church Brampton (Northamptonshire), and other early ones are at Tamworth (Staffordshire) and Wootton-Wawen (Warwickshire).

The evolution of the more ornate chest, too, began as early as the 14th century, but the chest did not reach its heyday until about two hundred years later. The panelled, finely-carved strongbox of post-Reformation construction often bears a date or initials, which enable its age to be accurately determined. Nevertheless, earlier chests were not without embellishments: some had ornamental iron bands, and others were painted. It is from an examination of the decorations on a seven-hundred-year-old chest at Newport (Essex) that we know of the use of oils in painting as far back as the 13th century.

Refinements after the Reformation included more elaborate locks and hinges. Earlier chests often had no hinges, the lid being pivoted on pegs, while, to hinder thieves who might try to prise open the lid at the back, strong chains were attached there. An early example which is an exception to the general rule that pre-Reformation chests were without inscriptions is at Cratfield (Suffolk). The inscription asks for prayers on behalf of Ralph Walsh, who gave the chest.

The locks of these ancient strongboxes are a study in themselves, for despite their crude construction they are often ingenious pieces of mechanism. Usually three keys were provided, one being retained by the parson and the others by churchwardens. Some of the locks were so designed that each key had to be used in turn before the chest could be opened, so that all three custodians had to be present when the contents of the receptacle were needed. In other instances, separate locks of different design were fitted, each with a key of its own. At Ashbocking (Suffolk) is a chest, possibly about seven hundred years old, with four primitive locks.

Flemish influence is plainly discernible in the carved panels which enhance some of our ancient church strongboxes. A superb specimen, made during the second half of the 15th century, is in Northchurch Church (Hertfordshire), this being richly carved. It has seven panels on the front, five of them exquisite examples of the woodcarver's art.

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The other two, now blank, probably carried plaques inscribed with the name of the donor, or with the names of the clerics and churchwardens responsible for the safety of the chest.

THAT there is still scope for discoveries in connection with ancient church coffers is shown by experiences in recent years. In 1927 a rare specimen from the early 14th century was found in Broxbourne Church (Hertfordshire). It had lain in what is known as the priest's dwelling, a dark upper room in the church. The apartment could be reached only by climbing a ladder, which could then be pulled up, and authoritative opinion is that this room was a hideout to which the priest retired in times of danger, taking the church vestments, plate, and documents with him. The inaccessibility of the room accounted for the chest remaining unnoticed there for years, though apparently it was in use in Georgian times, the lid being a replacement from that period.

The story of these pieces of ecclesiastical furniture is partly concerned with alms-boxes, some of the chests having been adapted to take donations. An edict in the 16th century abolished Peter's pence, the tax imposed by Rome, but it was replaced by a law requiring every church to provide a poor man's box for offerings to relieve poverty. Instead of having a separate box specially made for this purpose, existing chests were sometimes provided

with a slot and a separate compartment inside.

Heckfield (Hampshire) has such a chest, though its use as a poor-box was unsuspected for many years, until the slot was rediscovered in 1903. This chest is one of the smallest of its kind, being only 3 feet long, 17 inches wide, and 20 inches high. Another good example of a poor man's chest is at Cheshunt (Hertfordshire).

Our venerable church coffers have their legends and traditions, too. A specimen of the dugout type at Lower Peover (Cheshire) is believed to be a relic from Norton Priory, and tradition says that any maiden who aspires to be a farmer's wife will never have her wish gratified unless she can throw back the heavy lid with one hand. This chest is made of oak, and that kind of wood was used in most other instances. But at Eckington (Worcestershire) is a chest of elm, and Cheveley (Cambridgeshire) has one of cypress.

Apart from the fact that the use of such strongboxes in bygone days helped to preserve ancient records, and thus helped the historian, these objects of church furniture are nearly always worth examining for their craftsmanship, decorations, and method of construction. Many chests were sold and put to use outside the churches in the reign of Edward VI, when Parliament completed the Reformation in England, and many objects associated with the Catholic religion were removed. Nevertheless, several hundreds of chests from distant days remain in village churches up and down the countryside.

Brittle is this Moment

*Brittle as the moonlight is this moment,
Fragile as a shell of ice. This moment
Waits like clay to take the impress of a touch.*

*This moment hangs suspended like a cloud,
Waiting a breath to send it on its way,
Waiting to answer whispers from the wind.*

*The slightest movement, smallest sound, will break
This shell, scatter the silence, set a course
For time, weave fabric from the moon, or snap*

*The thread that binds us, liquefy the rose,
And wipe the silver from the tinselled leaves.
This brittle moment is our starting-point.*

TOM WRIGHT.



Your Garden in November

I ALWAYS call November the 'making month,' because there are so many constructional jobs that can be carried out during this period. For instance, it is possible to lay new lawns, or to make new flowering-shrub borders, or to lay down new paths, or to plan and plant fresh herbaceous borders. Garden-steps may be erected, pergolas may be put up, it is rather fun to build a little summerhouse, all kinds of water-plants may be put into the garden-pool, a rock-garden could be made, while, of course, there are many trees, like beech, holly, laburnum, lilac, rhododendron, walnut, and yew, that could be planted.

There is still time during the first week or so of the month to plant different varieties of hardy bulbs. It is rather late for the earliest flowering ones, but, for the north at any rate, it is certainly better late than never. The biennials that are going to be used for the main winter bedding should be planted during the first fortnight, and, if necessary, hydrated lime will be used as a top-dressing at from 5 to 7 ounces to the square yard. Do not forget to fasten the growths of the newly-planted climbers. They will want to be nice and safe for the winter. If you wish to propagate from your early-flowering chrysanthemums, you will have to lift the stools that are now out of doors, shake most of the soil off the roots, and then plant them firmly in a cold-frame or in the soil of a cold greenhouse.

It will help the Christmas-roses if you cover them about the middle of the month with a four-sided cloche so as to keep out the wet. On the herbaceous border that you planted last autumn an application of really well rotted compost can be spread all over the land for the worms to pull in. Consult an up-to-date rose catalogue and order the varieties that you wish to plant this winter, and mark your order urgent. Maybe your desire is to have a group of flowering shrubs and, if so, most of the deciduous kinds can be put in just now, as well as a number of the evergreens, like berberis, cotoneaster, ruscus spartium, and viburnum.

In the vegetable garden the celery will have

its final earthing up. Make certain that the stems are gripped tightly as the soil is brought around them, so that the earth does not get into the hearts. For this reason some gardeners wrap the plants round with paper or corrugated cardboard first of all. There is yet time to plant out some coleworts or collards, as they are called, one foot square, in order to provide some winter greens. Many in the north-west, where it is warmer, or in the south will sow a few rows of the long-pod broad-beans about the 10th of the month. This is considered by some a gamble, but it is not, really, in gardens that are sheltered. Of course, if the rows can be covered with cloches there is no fear of the beans being killed at all.

Keep on picking the rows of spinach and try to do this without treading among the plants too much. That is why I like a raised bed about 4 feet wide, because then the picking can be done from the paths on either side. It may be necessary to lift a number of the root crops and to store them properly in clamps, buries, or hales. Do not make the hales of the carrots too large or the carrots may heat up and rot off. That is one of the great troubles with this root crop. Some will say leave the parsnips where they are and dig them up as required. I prefer to get them up and release the land for its winter digging, and then to leave the roots on the surface of the ground so that they are sweetened by the frost and washed clean by the rain.

It is not too far on in the year to feed the late leeks, for they will go on growing as long as the weather keeps open. Use the bottled liquinure, which you can easily dissolve with water, and then apply this liberally in between the rows. Sow a hardy round-seeded variety of pea, like Meteor or Kelvedon Wonder. Have the rows 2 feet apart, and if you have continuous cloches cover the rows with them and you will be picking peas next May. Even after last winter with all its rain we picked our first peas on 28th May! It is wonderful the way that marrows and squashes will keep if they are allowed to grow until they are ripe and then are hung up

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in fish-netting from the roof of an airy shed.

Do not forget to do all the ridging and bastard trenching that is possible, so as to leave the land nice and rough for the winter frosts to act on. Take every opportunity, also, of collecting all the falling leaves this month, either to form a hot-bed with some manure or to use on the compost-heap to rot down with a suitable activator. Cut down the stems of the globe artichokes and remove the decaying leaves. Put some straw or bracken along the rows afterwards to protect the plants from frost. This may always be removed during the mild, damp periods. Heel over the broccoli towards the north for protection. This can easily be done if a spadeful of soil is taken out on the north side and then is placed on the south side after the heel has pushed the plant over a little.

Be sure to give plenty of ventilation to the lettuces growing in the frames, especially during mild weather. It is important to keep the surface of the soil cultivated and to remove any bottom leaves that appear to be diseased. Give sufficient water in between the plants, because botrytis so often occurs when the roots are dry. Look after the bulbs that are being stored and remove any decaying specimens there may be, to prevent the trouble spreading. Lift some of the rhubarb crowns and leave them on the surface of the ground to be touched by the frost before they are brought into heat for forcing.

There is a good deal of work to do in the greenhouse. For example, a number of the Roman hyacinths and paper-white hyacinths can be brought in for forcing. We usually pot up the lily of the valley, choosing the best strong crowns, and bring these into the house, too. The dielytras as well can be potted up and the herbaceous calceolarias potted on into their 6-inch pots, using the John Innes Potting Compost No. 2. This is a good time for planting the vine in properly prepared ground. Details may be found in my *The A.B.C. of the Greenhouse*. Prune vines on the spur system, all the laterals being cut back to within one plump eye of their base.

Be very careful not to overcrowd the decorative and single-flowered chrysanthemums, many of which should be at their best now. Fumigate the house with a D.D.T. smoke-bomb to keep down pests. The begonia Glorie de Lorraine generally commences to flower at the beginning of November and goes on until the end of January. Pot on

the primula obconica into 6-inch pots and treat the clarkia in a similar manner. Prick out the seedlings of browallias and pot up the Canterbury bells. Stake the chrysanthemums if they need it and pot on the cinerarias. The coleuses can be potted on also. More generally it will help tremendously if the outside glass of the greenhouse is washed down.

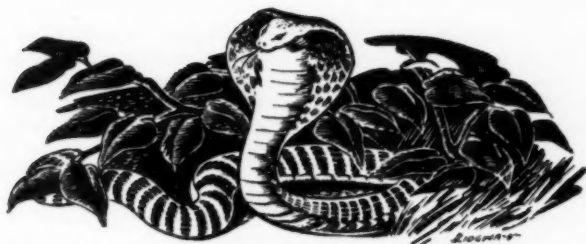
Start to prune the fruit trees and bushes the moment all the leaves have fallen. Begin with the soft fruits and then go on to the apples, pears, and plums. In the case of the black-currants, it means cutting out the old wood and leaving the new, and in the case of the red-currants, cutting back the new wood to within two buds of its base and leaving the old. Tend to underprune the top fruits rather than overprune, remembering that pruning merely delays cropping rather than encourages it. Leave the gooseberry pruning until the spring, or else the birds may ruin the buds.

Buy the necessary tar-distillate wash or D.N.C., ready for spraying towards the end of the month or in December. Plant any of the fruits, choosing in the case of the raspberries the newer varieties like Malling Promise, Malling Enterprise, Malling Landmark, and Malling Jewel; in the case of the black-currants choose Malvern Cross, Cotswold Cross, and Mendip Cross. This month, do any root-pruning that is necessary. Protect the fig-trees with straw in the really cold districts. Hang mats down in front of them. Clear up and burn all prunings, to destroy the eggs of insects and the spores of diseases.

There are a number of odd jobs that can also be carried out this month. They include the planting of bulbs in bowls; the blanching of endives, either in the open or in a forcing-shed; the cutting back of a berberis hedge; the cleaning and packeting of seed saved during the autumn; the tying up of the indoor sweet-peas; the pruning of the peaches under glass; the taking of cuttings from the late varieties of chrysanthemums; and the removing of the old leaves from the sprouts and savoys. The mushroom-bed may need casing with subsoil and some of the lawns may have to be swept and mown for the last time. Some will clip their lavender hedges early this month; others will plant a lonicera hedge.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.



Undaunted Cobra

W. MURRAY MARSDEN

THIS true account derives from two main sources: firstly, from three closely-written pages of my field notebook; secondly, and in at least equal measure, from an uneasiness of conscience on the matter, which has persisted undiminished over the years between. Things might have been very different—certainly less pitiful and grim—had not the swart boy, Mintower, cast that first stone.

It was past the middle of April, and rain was to be expected—was, indeed, badly needed. Up on the veld area of the farm the herbage, all but those mysterious succulents, was parched and crackling. One found up there sometimes the dead lambs of valuable merino ewes. Of an early morning there might be frost, when Dinah and her colleague from their close-packed location came along to the homestead and the daily chores, looking rather blue with cold for all their voluminous blanketings. Later on, the sun would resume his sway, having risen, it might be, from dark masses of clouds that hung about the encircling flat-topped hills and kopjes. Every sundown and morning we saw these clouds; but the rain held off. And the days were hot, with sometimes blazing sunshine. The day on which these things happened was one of them.

At the midday meal the main topic was, of course, the drought. For overworked farmer and wife, that could hardly be otherwise. One relief, however, there was. Water was to be released forthwith from the communal reservoir and some was to be led about garden and orchard, as well as through the lands.

After a shortened siesta I went—as any idle, curious guest might go—down towards the garden, crossing the water furrow and passing the shrunken bathing-tank on my way. That the garden was visited by cobras, 'everybody knew,' as the phrase goes. My hostess had, indeed, met with them in the course of collecting flowers, fruit, or saladings. My daylong studying of birds had brought me acquainted with various snakes, including cobras. We had always parted amicably, so far. This meeting was to have a sadly different issue.

As I left the furrow's bank for the garden proper, I noticed that Mintower, the senior boy, in his 'shocking bad hat' was leading the water with a spade a bit to my right, between me and a row of standard fig-trees—say, ten of them and about twenty feet high. As I saw him, I saw, too, the long bronze-yellow form of the cobra glide from almost at my feet and take across a bed of violet-plants, the apple of my hostess's bright eyes. Snakes may very well, as we know, lurk in the grass—but venom is ill company for violets. The cobra went streaking over them and was quickly seen by Mintower, who left his leading to find a stone fit for an hereditary foe. Left-handed, too, was his cast, and a very good one—so near a miss that the slithering target took evasive action, making for the nearest of the fig-trees and into the upper branches, along which it continued to travel at speed.

The cobra may have thought it was cornered by the two of us; or the weavy branches, even now not wholly leafless, may have been one

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of its accustomed ambushes. Whether or not one of the subsequent left-handers had tickled it up—the twigs and branches made a very effective zarefa—the cobra decided that the cold stage of this war upon two fronts was ended. Down it slid towards the forky bole of the next fig-tree and there took position—in tight coils, its head now hooded, waving on the strong supple stalk, its tongue flickering. It was frightened and angry. And, I thought, you do very well to be angry. Mintower and I (or at any rate Mintower!) are aggressors, and we know very well what the world thinks (or professes to think) of such as they. Whereas you, poor indignant furious beast, have never even so much as heard that you were cursed above all the others.

At that point my swart ally melted away with his spade through the garden growth towards an adjacent mealie-patch and the resumption of his beneficent leading. Me he had, unwitting, led into something of a difficult situation.

SO far as I was concerned, I was content to be watching, with my Zeiss bird-glasses, the angry cobra—to watch, and to admire. For a really roused cobra I had never seen, in the wild, before and might very well never be seeing again.

So far, indeed, as an idle, curious guest was concerned, the cobra and I had proclaimed an armistice, the cobra calming down, and, especially, furling that hood; coming down from the tree and gliding quietly and beautifully away—even almost musically so, like the suave ending of some Scarlatti sonatina. Had it just disappeared, as though it had never been, I might then have fulfilled my part in the armistice—my part of doing, and of saying, nothing. And Mintower's puzzled silence might have been procured by a bag of Boer tobacco.

But there was more in the problem than that. There would then be not merely a cobra in my hostess's garden: it would be a cross cobra, and one nursing not only a bruise or two, but also an active, and warranted, resentment against *homo sapiens*, whether blond or brunette. A disgruntled cobra amongst a lady's chrysanthemums? 'God shield us!', bully Bottom.

Besides, there were others—as Toby the dog, placid companion of my wanderings after birds in the bush; as James, the small

but adventurous kitten. No, the issue plainly could rest upon no whim of mine. It was a fatal issue, to be taken out of my hands, though these were, alas, to be literally involved.

A voice called from behind me, and, lo, my hostess—lo, too, James the kitten, coming with comparable daintiness into the garden. To them the situation was made known—the cobra in its strong redoubt 'display'd,' as old writers have it. My hostess, considering, wrinkled her brows. 'I'll go up and get you a gun,' says she, and off she went.

I hoped she would bring a shotgun and two or three cartridges with charges of nothing smaller than, say, number five pellets. With that, I thought, and given the immunity of the now invisible Mintower, the unavoidable job could probably be done—and done quickly. However, the weapon handed to me proved to be a rather heavy little .22 repeater rifle, which, I was informed, was always kept loaded. The small calibre did not worry me, for I knew it at home, against rats, rabbits, and, on occasion, an outwitted egg-stealing magpie or so. But this unwonted weapon—I knew nothing of the repeater action—with its power, potential range—not to mention ricochets—this was not apt for my use against the target offered by that hooded head swaying up there amongst the lattice-work.

There was valuable stock all round, to say nothing of my late colleague, who, for all I knew, might be leaning on his spade, watching me—watching not without amusement. Here, then, stood the curious guest, rifle in hand, the cobra 'creating,' as they say, in its zarefa before a duly-appointed but nonplussed executioner.

Suddenly I heard the small voice of James the kitten round my feet. The gentle seepage of the led water had put him about. He was lifting paws in protest. For me, he must go on lifting and shaking, now this paw, now that, now one of the others. There were graver matters toward. But it was something not to be alone.

I decided to fire, and to fire, if the repeater worked, twice, at the thickest part of the coils about the, say, six to eight-inch trunk, where best I could make it out. After the second shot, the cobra lowered its head, making as though to resume its branch-line travelling. But no—that could not be. It must stay, poor beast, where it was, and take what was coming, under that curse.

A wound opened in the thick of the coil,

UNDAUNTED COBRA

showing white substance, and therewith red blood. If, as seemed likely, my two shots had been crippling, I must risk one shot more, hoping for a vital spot and that the bullet would stay in the fig-wood. After this third shot, the head, still bravely hooded, came slowly wavering down from the coils, and presently a large frog, yellow and whitish and blood-stained, was vomited forth. Such a large frog—a giant to any of ours—I had once seen in a cobra's jaws about the stone face of a dam. An undisturbed and luckier cobra that, but not, presumably, a luckier frog.

James the kitten, by this time marooned on higher ground at the tree-foot, went daintily to inspect the strange object that lay below the slowly-swaying hood—and withdrew, mewing. I hoped that all was nearly over. But no, the neck and head were slowly drawn up again: once more the hood was aloft, nailed, as it were, to the mast. Within the jaws my glasses showed blood-stained fangs, for often the poor beast gaped widely and sometimes a dullness came over the angry eyes. If only I knew how to end the matter!

Once, indeed, I drew nearer, with my stout staff. But the cobra had still strength to collect its forces. The staff could not strike through as the bullets had done—and it was too short, anyway. There was nothing for it but a vigil; a vigil in the sunshine, one I must always remember—not, I believe, to my disadvantage, the world being what it is.

MEANWHILE the irrigation had attracted birds to the garden. A couple of 'toppie' bulbs came to perch on that very tree, staying there awhile to gaze quizzically, heads on one side, at a cobra behaving so very oddly. With their feathery perukes, and drabbish-green uniforms, they rather suggested flunkies in an 18th-century death-chamber. More busily, a flock of red-fronted weaver-birds invaded near-by bushes—drinking, bathing, fluttering, and chattering. A bright trio of golden-breasted buntings sipped daintily, rather apart. All, you would say, very pretty and peaceful amid that sunshine and scent of South Africa and the insistent croonings of those her turtle-doves, in memory to mean nostalgia.

But anon comes Mintower, with staves and with stones, clattering and battering about his foe in the fig-tree. Away go the birds—and presently away goes Mintower. In some

sort he has failed, for the cobra is still coiled in its stronghold. Now, however, there are flies, finding their way to the wound—to the now slowly, slowly sinking head and shrinking hood, the gaping and gasping jaws that had once been active death.

Draw near them, where they now hang, scarcely moving (or is there a breeze?), and raise your stick, you in the sunshine there. Yes, you are still defied. That head you are to bruise has still strength to draw itself back and up, to steady, just a little, for the strike: has still its answer for you. All the beasts of the field have their answers, for to those ends were they all fashioned.

The flock of weavers has left us; I am no longer standing in water; James the kitten has disappeared. My watch tells me it is nearly two hours since the cobra crossed the violet-bed. Thinking shame to myself, I am aware of Mintower again, this time with a hoe. He makes some quick and wary attempts to hook the victim down. They are futile. The spark of courage, with paralysis, or maybe rigor, in those coils, defies even his accustomed methods. We decide—I with shame—to leave the cobra alone up there. By now, James may be back at the homestead, beside his saucer of pedigree milk! I go up to join him and report to my hosts.

In twenty minutes my host and I went down to the fig-tree, provided with longer and stouter staves. Even then, I was sure the poor beast was aware of us, would resist us if only it could. But the time for that was past. With some trouble, we finally bruised that serpent's head and drew down the slackened length of the creature from the tree. There it lay, between us—something over five feet of it. So much of a pothole about a beast of the field no larger than that? But I, at least, was still saddened by the thought, not only of that courage, but also of that curse.

The chilling wind of sundown came across the garden. We moved away and were presently aware once more of the swart Mintower, in a large overcoat, again with his spade—carrying slowly away, for some purpose of his own, the corpse of the cobra. Dead, and dangling as it was, for me it was still undaunted.

To be cursed is, to be sure, a great handicap in life. But that, I suppose, is what the cobra never knew, poor beast of the field. Yet most of all was it hapless in its blundering executioner.

Science at Your Service

A DICTATING MACHINE

A RECENTLY invented office machine for dictation and later reproduction is justifiably described as remarkable. The dictated speech is recorded on a sheet of magnetic-surfaced paper. This sheet can be replayed as many times as desired, its recording can be totally or partially erased automatically, and it can even be posted for use on another machine in another office. The same machine acts as both dictator and reconverter into speech.

The microphone converts the dictation into a modulated current. This, after amplification, is transmitted to a recording head which passes over the magnetised sheet as it revolves on a cylinder. The composition on the sheet is magnetised to degrees proportional to the current in the recording head, and a spiral trace is thus produced on the sheet. During reproduction, the reverse process occurs, the spiral trace inducing a modulated voltage in the recording head which, after amplification again, is fed to headphones or loudspeaker. One sheet can carry up to twelve minutes', or 1500 to 2000 words' dictation. The same sheet can be used again and again, as, when reused, the previous spiral is automatically erased; also, brushing the sheet with a special magnet will erase the dictation spiral, thus making erasure possible without actually putting the sheet through the machine again. During dictation, corrections may easily be made: a control steps back the sheet by the equivalent of four seconds' dictation.

The machine itself is neatly housed in a moulded plastic case and is not much larger than a portable typewriter. It operates on 110, 130, or 220 A.C. supply voltage.

The machine can be used for recording telephone conversations. Even whispered dictation can be loudly reproduced by using the amplifying volume-control for reproduction. A European invention, this revolutionary dictating appliance is now distributed in Britain and it is understood that it will shortly be manufactured here. The magnetic sheets are easy to handle, being much like carbon-copy paper used in typing.

HAIRCUTTING ADVANCE

The invasion of haircutting by the electric-clipper is now well established and most men find that this type of instrument has reduced the length of time they must spend in the barber's chair. One firm manufacturing clippers believes that fuller use could be made of them, and at recent exhibitions demonstrations have been given showing that the complete haircut can be clipper-operated and the total time reduced by several minutes. This particular clipper has 6000 cutting movements per minute and a simple lever gives flexible control over the length of cutting. Some hairdressers are already employing it for an all-clipper method of haircut.

This firm has recently extended the same principle of construction to clippers for cutting dog and cattle hair. These animal clippers operate at a high rate, and a condenser is introduced to reduce the A.C. mains voltage from 200-250 to 20.

A HOUSEHOLD REFRIGERATOR

A new refrigerator has several features of appeal. The mechanical unit, though sealed, is fully accessible for testing and maintenance, so that repairs, when required, can usually be effected on the spot. The top of the cabinet is a stainless-steel working-surface and in many small kitchens this will make better use of the space utilised by a refrigerator, particularly as the cabinet is only three feet high, so that the top is at a suitable working-level. The cold-storage chamber, which has a capacity of 3½ cubic feet, is well fitted with accessory shelves. Underneath this a large drawer for dry but non-refrigerated storage of foods, etc., is provided, another design development that enables full use to be made of the total room-space occupied by the refrigerator.

The exterior is well finished in cream. Interior lighting is automatic. The unit is guaranteed for five years by the manufacturers. The price is below rather than above the average price of household refrigerators of similar refrigerating capacity.

CUPS THAT LIFT

The simple principle of the vacuum-sticking rubber cup by which such articles as ashtrays may be fixed on the interior panels of cars is well known. Compressing the rubber cup expels air from it; the resilience of rubber then causes a partial return of the cup or dome to its previous shape so that a vacuum is created inside the cup. The atmospheric pressure outside being much greater, the cup can hold attached articles to the surface quite firmly so long as this vacuum remains sealed. This principle has now been ingeniously developed to produce new lifting devices for handling fragile sheet-materials, such as glass, tiles, thin metal, or plastics. The cups are attached either singly or in pairs to small metal frames; the frames are designed for holding in one hand or two hands. Pressing the cups upon a sheet of material produces the vacuum necessary to enable the cups to be used as lifting devices. Each frame or handle has a trigger device which, on pressing, lets air into the evacuated cups and thus releases the sheet rapidly. In this way, long sheets of thin materials can be quickly lifted and just as quickly released if two workers are using the new appliance, one at each end of the sheet of material.

The advantages of this simple appliance will be most appreciated by those who have experienced the difficulties involved in handling thin-sheet materials. Protective gloves are constantly worn out in gripping edges that are thin and sharp. In separating one sheet from another in the pile there is a perpetual risk of finger-jamming and injury. With fragile material there is, too, a considerable breakage risk, particularly during the period when initial hand-grip is being made. All these troubles are minimised by this new lifting appliance.

ANTI-ARTHRITIS PROGRESS

It is now well known that post-war medical research in the U.S.A. led to a new drug called cortisone, which, when regularly injected, conquers arthritis almost spectacularly. Unfortunately the cost of manufacturing this substance has been just as spectacularly high. It is made from animal bile, and some thirty to forty chemical reactions are required before one of the constituents of bile is converted into cortisone; also, several hundred steers are required to supply enough bile to make less than an ounce of cortisone. A small and

expensive supply has to meet a huge potential demand. Ever since cortisone's remarkable properties were established in hospitals, chemists have been seeking an easier and cheaper method of making the drug. There is now good reason to believe that Mexican chemical research has opened the way for both increasing the supply of cortisone and lowering its cost. From a substance found in a fairly abundant Mexican yam, chemists have produced cortisone with only about half the number of reactions that are required to produce it from animal material. A plant to handle 500 tons of yams a month is already operating and it is said that the total American demand should be met within about three years. If these hopes are fulfilled, sufferers from many other distressing ailments besides arthritis may benefit, for since the original medical research with arthritis it has been found that cortisone relieves other serious illnesses.

WATER IN ALCOHOL

Alcohol used as a solvent in chemical laboratories or in chemical manufacture must be very free from water. A British chemist has recently developed a simple test for determining whether alcohol contains between a thousandth and a two-hundredth part of water—a new indicator-paper test that is as easy to carry out as the well-known litmus-paper test for acids and alkalis. The paper is impregnated with two different chemicals. The first zone of the paper reached by the alcohol when a strip of this paper is dipped into it is impregnated with zinc sulphate. Zinc sulphate is insoluble in alcohol but soluble in water. Any water in the alcohol will therefore dissolve some of the zinc sulphate, and this solution on further absorption by the paper runs into the second zone, which is impregnated with potassium ferricyanide. Whenever a zinc-salt solution contacts potassium ferricyanide, a characteristic blue colour is formed. Therefore, if there is water in the alcohol, a blue colour will be formed on the test paper. Furthermore, the depth and amount of the blue colour formed on the paper will show with reasonable accuracy how much water is present, whether it is a thousandth per cent or a two-hundredth per cent. While this new device has practical interest only for laboratory workers, it provides an interesting example of modern and rapid chemical-test methods.

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FRUIT-DRYING IN HOP-KILNS

There are numerous hop-kilns in British fruit-growing areas; some of these kilns are not now fully used for their original purpose, and even where they are still operated to capacity the drying of hops is a seasonal process. Recent experiments with small-scale kiln models have shown that hop-kilns can be easily converted into fruit-dryers. Apples cut into rings or similar segments were satisfactorily dried, hot air heated by oil-burners being employed. The fruit was held in wooden frames with bottoms of netting. The dried fruit kept without deterioration under good storage conditions. Czar plums were also dried whole, and the product was comparable with most imported prunes, except that they were rather less sweet, a natural quality of English plums. On the other hand, more of the original fresh-fruit flavour was retained than is the case with Continental prunes. If hop-kilns could be seasonally used for drying our own fruit in bumper fruit seasons, there is little doubt that what is all too often a substantial wastage of perishable crops could be greatly reduced.

AN ABRASIVE HAND-SOAP

A tablet soap recently and specially designed for removing hand stains and dirt of every description, including paint, should be of value in workshops, factories, farms, and for household use where gardening or car-maintenance is much pursued. The claim made by the manufacturers that even the worst of stains can be comfortably removed has been personally tested by the writer. The soap has a fine texture despite the inclusion of 25 per cent of a mild abrasive material. This smoothness of texture is achieved by the presence of glycerine, and as the soap is prepared by a semi-cold process none of the glycerine is lost. As compared with ordinary domestic soaps, this special-duty hand-soap possesses considerably higher detergent power. It produces an abundant lather and the skin is left soft and smooth after washing. This must be regarded as an interesting technical development, for it is an answer by the traditional 'soap tablet' to modern competition from various new detergents. Furthermore, it is a very powerful answer. Not many years ago a soap with such high abrasive content could not have been manufactured without a gritty texture and a harsh washing effect.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL WITH GAS

A new thermostatic instrument for controlling room or storage temperature where direct gas-heating is employed seems to offer a number of advantages, not least of which is the economy in fuel consumption that invariably follows constant temperature control. The instrument is fitted into the gas-supply pipe that feeds the gas-fire, panel heater, radiator, or similar direct-heating appliance. It has a sensitive reaction to temperature change and its range of control is 40-90 degrees Fahr. The top of the regulator has this range of temperatures shown on a circular scale and it is only necessary to rotate the control-knob so that the pointer is set against the desired room or storage temperature. The height of the regulator is only 5½ inches, so it cannot be regarded as a clumsily unpleasant addition to a gas-supply pipe.

The principle of the regulator is the control of the gas-supply valve by means of an expansion tube. A change in room temperature causes this tube to contract or expand and this increases or reduces the rate at which gas passes through the regulator to the heating appliance. It is important that the regulator is fitted in a suitable position. Obviously, if the position chosen is exposed to draught or to the direct line of heat radiation, it will not be responding to the normal room temperature changes. Already this device is quite widely used in maintaining even temperatures in greenhouse-heating or in fruit-ripening storage chambers, but it is claimed that considerable gas economy and comfort can be achieved when the appliance is introduced into ordinary domestic gas-heating practice. A further model is available for indirect gas-heating systems.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

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